

Sketch

Harriet ducks her comeuppance



Simon Hoggart

IT WAS tense, agonising and finely balanced, but Harriet Harman won. At some point in the previous 24 hours she had finally realised how desperate her position was. As she should have done on Monday, she came out fighting.

She was fortunate in her timing. She slid on to the front bench as John Major was making a statement on Northern Ireland and the Mitchell report. She was wearing a puce trouser suit, which some might think an even greater offence than sending her child to a selective school. The Tories remained silent.

The Sainted John Hume (SDLP, Foyle) had just contrived to imply that the Prime Minister had decided on elections in the province in order to buy Unionist votes. Very few believe that. And it's hard to persuade MPs to speak against elections, since it's elections which made them what they are today, whatever that might be.

Mr Hume has shown astonishing bravery over the past 27 years. He receives death threats as often as more comfortable MPs get lunch invitations. Yet he brings a pious whiff of incense, a breath of the Celtic mists. Tories have never quite trusted him, so when the Prime Minister angrily denied that he had any intention of buying votes, they cheered him again. The Tories find it hard to have two enemies at once — it's the equivalent, in LBJ's words, of having to fart and chew gum at the same time.

Ms Harman was also fortunate in her topic: it would be hard to make a speech about the NHS which didn't rouse Labour cheers. Most of all, she

was blessed in her persecutors. David Shaw (Dover) and Quentin Davies (Stamford) are the kind of Tories who make Labour MPs suspect she might even deserve some sympathy.

And when David Trednick (Bosworth), one of the MPs who took cash for questions, interrupted, even her old enemy John Prescott rubbed his fingers as if to ask "how much this time?"

But it was Elaine Kelleth-Bowman who saved her. Ms Harman had persistently ignored her attempts to intervene. The Dame's voice rose higher. At one point she screamed "Sexist!" across the Chamber, and somewhere nearby several bairns fell dead from the rafters.

She tried again. And again. Finally she rose on a point of order. Now her voice was so shrill I could barely hear her. Still, it did end one hitherto unsolved mystery: why did Devon Loch fall just yards from winning the 1956 Grand National? Dame Elaine must have been cheering it on.

"Is it in order," she squealed, jamming air traffic control as far away as Prestwick. "For her to practise SEX DISCRIMINATION?"

Mr Hume paused a moment. "It isn't sex discrimination which makes me not respond to the honourable lady's intervention. It is kindness."

Another pause, then the Labour benches erupted in delight. Trivial, meaningless, insulting — it was all of those things. But in the weird physics of parliament, it was a pivot, the moment at which Labour backbenchers decided to forgive her — for now.

She will receive her punishment in the autumn at the Shadow Cabinet elections. But her happy day should not conceal the cause of the deep and bitter resentment still felt by most of her colleagues. The party's worst disaster since 1992 has been the fault of a quintessential member of the inner circle. Mr Blair had to protect Ms Harman by hurling his leadership in front of her frail body. He may not be able to do this again.

Book review

A sauce of sexual gratification

Simon Hoggart

A Woman's Place
Edwina Currie

EDWINA Currie will get some awful reviews for this book, and I am determined that she should have at least one in every chapter. The novel rattles along. There is murder, rape, suicide, gay scandal and bags of political crises. Most of her characters can expect to get laid and resign from office at least once in every chapter.

She also captures the sleaziness of the Conservative Party and, in the crooked Asian businessman buying himself a peerage, has created a fine monster.

Mrs Currie is a good hater, and it's fun to guess which old scores she is paying off. She or her publishers have also defied the Speaker, two years ago Ms Boothroyd rebuked her for using the Commons portaculis, the House's log on the cover of A Parliamentary Affair. This time it appears twice, decorating a pair of long, silk-sheathed legs.

Traditionally, thrillers written by MPs have good political scenes, interspersed with dollops of embarrassing sex. This one, published by Hodder, is the reverse: sex with some less convincing political scenes.

This may be because Mrs Currie's ministerial career was so short. She is a healthy

woman, and I would guess she has spent more of her life having sex than going through red boxes. That would account for her greater assurance in that field.

In any event, no firm rump stays unpunished, no bosom unfurled, no penis goes for long without flickering into life, often several times a night. Mrs Currie's fascination with reproduction and the dessert trolley has continued. In the last book the heroine licked a strawberry from her lover's private parts; in this, her boyfriend covers her in chocolate sauce ("reared up and seized her breasts... chocolate stains, you know. I hope you got it all off.")

The main drawback is the prose. I would guess it has been thoroughly edited, but the most carefully fretsaw work cannot cut round the more inelegant lines, which bring the reader's eye to a jerky halt.

For instance: "Chadwick swallowed as he remembered his relief that the HIV test had come through negative"; "she unfastened the buttons of his shirt, as his arms hung helplessly at his side. In a moment his shirt and a Damart vest had joined his coat on the floor"; and my favourite: "Thank you, Michael. The Queen kicked a corgi from under her feet, patted her stiff grey hair and stole a final look at herself in the mirror."

That said, I can imagine worse ways of passing a long journey.

Taiwan appeals for US arms as China 'prepares to unleash military assault'



Crowds gather under huge portraits of President Lee Teng-hui and his running mate, Premier Lien Chan, at their party headquarters in Taipei. The pair launched their campaign yesterday, ready for the poll on March 23

Andrew Higgins
in Hong Kong

TAIWAN yesterday appealed for more weapons from the United States amid signals from China that the People's Liberation Army has completed contingency plans for a limited military assault, possibly a rocket attack, on the island.

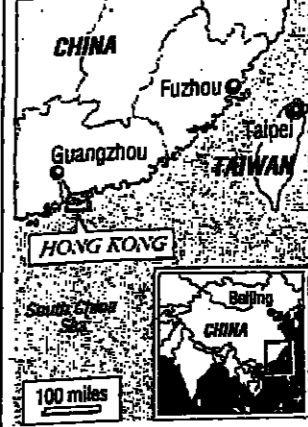
President Lee Teng-hui's request follows an intensifying campaign of intimidation by mainland China. In the past six months, Beijing has tested missiles, rehearsed amphibious landings and declared coastal areas facing Taiwan a "war zone".

People are screaming if they think this is not serious," said David Shambaugh, an authority on Sino-US relations at London University. "It has all the elements for a very combustible situation."

Particularly dangerous, experts say, is China's apparent belief that the US would not intervene to help Taiwan because of commitments in Bosnia and impending elections.

Taiwan television and evening newspapers gave extensive coverage to a New York Times report that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) could unleash an attack within weeks of Taiwan holding its first democratic presidential poll next month. The winner is likely to be the incumbent president, Mr Lee, condemned by Beijing as a "sinner for all millennia".

The US denied yesterday that it had received warnings from Beijing of a possible attack on Taiwan. "I am not aware of any specific Chinese assertions to the United States along the lines of those reported in the New York Times story this morning," the state department spokesman, Nicholas Burns, said.



China's belligerence towards Taiwan, which Beijing considers a rebel province, sends a worrying signal to Hong Kong, where the PLA will garrison some 6,000 troops after 1997. China has irredentist claims involving 10 neighbouring states.

China dismissed the report of an attack plan as "totally groundless". But US sources said Chinese leaders had raised such a possibility in private conversations.

Such warnings appear more an attempt to sound out US intentions and put pressure on Taiwanese voters than an indication of a clear battle plan.

Andrew Yang, head of the Chinese Council of Advance Policy Studies in Taipei, said factions within the PLA were pressing for military action but faced opposition from more prudent voices in an uncertain collective leadership.

The US, which viewed Taiwan as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the 1950s and 1960s, faces a dilemma over how far to support it. It scrapped a joint defence treaty and withdrew troops in 1978, but remains committed, under the Taiwan Relations Act, to providing arms of a "defensive character".

US revives firing squad's dying art

A condemned man's last requests are taxing the state, writes Ian Katz in Salt Lake City

JOHN ALBERT TAYLOR was quite specific about the pizza. "He wants mushroom, hot peppers, ham, pepperoni and extra cheese," said Jack Ford, spokesman for the Utah Department of Corrections. "And a Coke. He doesn't want a Pepsi, he wants a Coke. We'll have to order out."

Procuring Taylor's last meal is the least of the problems Utah authorities have faced since the convicted child murderer dropped his appeals last month and demanded to be put to death by firing squad, the state's traditional but now rarely used method of execution.

Since no one has been killed by firing squad in the United States since Gary Gilmore snuffed "let's do it" in 1977, prison officials were left scrambling to improvise a setting that would minimise its brutality.

That is precisely what Taylor, aged 36, intended. Explaining his rejection of the more popular lethal injection method, he said he did not want to "flop around... like a dying fish". But he also said he saw no reason to make life easy for his executioners.

But Utah's prison officials have proved resourceful in

reviving their dying art. Barring a last-minute change of heart, Taylor will be shot dead shortly after midnight tonight (8am GMT tomorrow), strapped to a specially built metal chair designed to "contain his bodily fluids" and funnel them into a pan underneath.

The execution will be carried out in a 25ft by 14ft fibre-board chamber erected in a warehouse at Utah State Prison. Five marksmen — four with live rounds — will fire .30-calibre rifles at a red cloth marking Taylor's heart from behind a partition.

A row of sandbags draped in a cloth has been placed behind the execution chair to avoid ricochets. "The drape is there just to pretty up the sandbags, to make it look less like an outdoor execution site," Mr Ford said.

To the chagrin of a booming state celebrating its centenary and looking forward to hosting the 2002 Winter Olympics, the execution has attracted international attention and made Utah the centre of a revived debate about capital punishment.

Both the American Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International say they will respect Taylor's wish not to mount appeals on his behalf. But their representatives, and a Catholic bishop, were to protest yesterday to senior state legislators.

Several legislators have said they will back a bill that could make this the last US execution by firing squad. "I believe it's 1996 and this is a very sad and difficult



Taylor: Due to die tonight. He refused a lethal injection

duty of the state of Utah," said Sheryl Allen, the Republican who proposed the bill. "We ought to be doing it in the most medically advanced way possible."

Taylor was convicted of raping and strangling Charla King, aged 11, in June 1989 — a crime he denies committing. If his execution, and that of Billy Bailey, a double murderer scheduled to be hanged in Delaware this morning, go ahead, they will bring to 315 the number of people put to death since the US supreme court lifted a ban on capital punishment in 1976.

Both men refused lethal injection, and death penalty opponents hope their unusual executions will help stir opposition.

But according to some state commentators, Utah's majority Mormon population believes the firing squad satisfies their church's requirement for "blood atonement" by murderers. Of 48 executions this century, 39 have been carried out by this method.

"It's really never been questioned," said L. Kay Gillespie, professor of criminal justice at Weber State University, Ogden. "It's pretty much business as usual in Utah."

Each member of a firing squad receives \$300 (\$200 in cash). "We let the heads of law enforcement agencies select the people," Mr Ford said. "We did not want people who were out for revenge and might want to shoot the guy in the knee-cap, or people who would have nightmares about it afterwards."

Since Taylor has not exhausted the appeals process, he will be able to stop the execution almost until the order to fire is given. A federal judge will be on stand-by.

A hood will be placed on Taylor's head before the execution, which will be watched by nine local reporters, five government representatives and up to five witnesses chosen by the condemned man.

Taylor was asked for a cigarette with his last meal, but smoking is barred indoors under Utah's Clean Air Act. "It has been decided that he will be allowed to smoke a cigarette on his way to the holding cell 24 hours before the execution," Mr Ford said. "He will be outside then, so it won't be breaking the law."

Fax an affront to House, say MPs

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

PETER PRESTON, the former editor of the Guardian, and the newspaper "were guilty of unwise and improper conduct" in forging a letter purporting to come from Jonathan Aitken, a former Cabinet minister, but no action will be taken against him, the Commons Privileges Committee ruled yesterday.

The committee condemns the former editor's action as an affront to the House. It adds: "It is unacceptable for anyone other than a Member of Parliament or a person acting on that member's authority to use official notepaper. It is even more unacceptable when the notepaper and a signature is used deliberately to give the impression that that authority has been given."

The report declines to go into the circumstances surrounding the use of what became known as the "cod fax", which was sent to obtain the former minister's bill at the Ritz Hotel, Paris, as part of an inquiry into Mr Aitken's stay there with two Arab businessmen.

Wider allegations involving payments to MPs made by Mohamed Al-Fayed, owner of Harrods and the Ritz, in private evidence to the committee, have been deleted from the report. Instead MPs have sent the evidence to Sir Gor-

don Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, so that it can be investigated by the new committee of privileges and standards, chaired by Tony Newton, Leader of the House. Mr Preston said yesterday that he welcomed this action.

Mr Preston, in evidence to MPs, apologised for using the fax. He said that he had sent it to protect his source and no one had been deceived. The legislation and fax numbers used were the Guardian's. Inquiries were being made in the public interest because Mr Aitken was not giving straightforward answers.

"I hope my reputation in almost 20 years at the Guardian was not as some mad ayatollah trying to pull down the temples of public life. Rightly or wrongly, I was very anxious... where I felt one was asking legitimate questions but was not being given straightforward answers, should be pursued."

Mr Al-Fayed in his evidence to MPs said he had been alerted to Mr Aitken's stay at the same time as two prominent Saudi businessmen, Mohammed Said Aayas, and Wafiq Said, an arms dealer, when his manager told him that Mr Aitken, then minister for defence procurement, was a guest of Mr Ayas.

This was later shown on the bill obtained through the fax. Mr Aitken has always denied that Mr Ayas paid his bill.



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الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية

Universities propose levy on students

John Carvel and Donald MacLeod

UNIVERSITY students could be made to pay an emergency levy of several hundred pounds a head under proposals being tabled this week by vice-chancellors' leaders anxious to recoup at least part of the 12 per cent cut in their income from the taxpayer due over the next three years.

The plan would break the principle that students should not have to pay for higher education and would add to financial pressures caused by recent progressive reductions in maintenance grants.

Gareth Roberts, chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and head of Sheffield University, said a one-off charge at a flat rate of perhaps between £100 and £200 could be levied on students at all universities in the academic year 1997/8.

"It is a short-term strategy," he said. "The medium-term one has to be to change the way higher education is funded."

Levying the charge would let universities recoup some of the cuts announced by Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, in the November Budget. By 1989 the vice-chancellors will be left £550 million short of the income needed to maintain the current service.

They fear the squeeze is likely to turn out to be even fiercer since the Government has not yet decided where to find the £100 million lost from the 1996/7 accounts when it was forced in December to postpone the privatisation of student loans.

The proposal for a levy on students was being completed last night for circulation to the 104 vice chancellors, who

will decide on their response to the Government at an emergency meeting on February 2. It was still not clear if it would apply to all first degree students or only the new intake of about 600,000 when they registered.

They will also be asked to debate an alternative option — a boycott of quality assurance measures which the Government has requested to assess how well students are taught.

A Guardian survey of vice-chancellors has established that both alternatives are hotly contested, but there is a determination that some decisive action must be taken to register opposition to unsustainable cuts.

"I am not willing to see the rundown of higher education in this country in the same way as secondary education if you don't believe in fairness students will have to pay," said Sir Derek Roberts, provost of University College London, whose academic board will consider a £1,000 top-up fee next month.

Martin Harris, vice-chancellor of Manchester University, said there was an option of cutting student intakes by 7 per cent to compensate for the cuts, but this would bring in no extra money. He told the university's ruling court that top-up fees, combined with a better student loans scheme, were now the only alternative to irreversible decline.

Mrs Shephard had been thought to be sympathetic to a top-up fee as long as universities took the responsibility. But a spokesman said yesterday the Government sees no need for top-up fees and is concerned they might disadvantage students from less well-off families.

Leader comment, page 6

Mortgage rate cut to 30-year-low

Teresa Hunter

BRITAIN'S fifth-biggest building society, the Bradford & Bingley, yesterday unleashed a new price-war by cutting its mortgage rate to a 30-year low in a bid to discredit competitors abandoning their century-old "mutual" tradition to become banks.

The Bradford & Bingley yesterday pledged to give £50 million of profits to its customers by cutting its mortgage rate by 0.25 per cent to a new low of 7.24 per cent. Savers will see their returns boosted by 0.25 per cent.

The move is designed to fire a shot across the bows of building societies such as the Halifax and the Woolwich which have promised their members big incentives if they support plans to convert to a public company.

Geoffrey Lister, Bradford & Bingley chief executive, said: "Building societies were set up to put their customers' interests first — not those of shareholders. Once a building society becomes a bank that is lost forever."

Rob Thomas, UBS housing analyst, suggested the B&B had triggered a mortgage price war.

He said: "It is a very significant move which will put pressure on all lenders to cut their rates. They may not do so immediately, but over time they will have to fall into line."

Mortgage rates

Percentage	Rate
Stafford	6.99
Bradford & Bingley	7.24
Cheltenham & Gloucester	7.24
Cambridge	7.25
Saffron Walden	7.25
Newbury	7.25
Kent Reliance	7.30
Yorkshire	7.30
Halifax	7.49
Abbey National	7.54

The Halifax and the Abbey National said they had no plans to follow. Their mortgage rates are now higher than a range of small lenders committed to remaining building societies.

B&B borrowers will see their repayments on a £60,000 mortgage fall by about £10 a month to £410 from March.

The society hopes the lower repayments will help kick-start the housing market, which has hit rock bottom with mortgage transactions in 1995 at their lowest for 21 years. But the society's main motive is to convince borrowers and savers there is no need to sell out their building societies.

Leader comment, page 6

Blair crushes revolt over Harman school decision

continued from page 1

selective school had inflicted long-term damage. They predicted a big drop in their poll lead.

Left-wing Labour backbenchers also forecast that the backlash would continue in the wider party and said Ms Harman would be ejected from the shadow cabinet in the autumn.

In the Commons, the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, mocked what he said was the failure of some shadow cabinet colleagues to support Ms Harman on the airwaves, dubbing their actions "the chorus of the Hebrew slaves in mime."

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poor local comprehensives in Tottenham, north London.

Later, Ms Harman survived Tory backbench charges of hypocrisy when she led a Labour attack in the Commons on the Government's health record. She swung some backbenchers round by claiming those using the private sector were refugees from an NHS starved of government resources.

Her future was raised only briefly at a private meeting of the shadow cabinet. Labour officials privately conceded that Ms Harman's choice of a



Sarah Cook arrives with her husband Musa Komeagac, and his father Ali for questioning by police in Kahramanmaraş

PHOTOGRAPH: OSMAN SAYIN

Court orders child bride to come back to Britain

Sally Weale and Alan Watkins

SARAH COOK, the 13-year-old Essex girl who married an unemployed Turkish waiter in an illegal Muslim ceremony, has been ordered to return to Britain after being made a ward of court. The order was made after an application by social services.

This followed outrage at her marriage three weeks ago to the 18-year-old, whom she met during a family holiday. Last night, however, it was unclear whether she would comply with the order, which is only enforceable within the jurisdiction of England and Wales.

After a 30-minute private application by Essex county council at London's High

Court yesterday, Sir Stephen Brown, president of the Family Division, ruled that Sarah should be returned to the court's jurisdiction forthwith.

He ordered that her passport should be surrendered on her return to the official solicitor, Peter Harris, and he barred her from travelling outside Britain without the permission of the court.

He also imposed a gagging order on her parents to prevent them giving further information to the media. Jackie and Adrian Cook are understood to have been paid £20,000 by the Sun for their daughter's story.

Yesterday the teenager from Braintree showed little sign of a change of heart. She was being cared for by the parents of her husband, Musa Komeagac, who remained in custody facing a charge of

rape after being refused bail. Her father-in-law, Ali Komeagac, said: "Sarah is my son's bride. If she wants to stay, our home is her home."

Her 37-year-old mother, who has said she now wants to bring her daughter home, was due to be reunited with Sarah in the town of Kahramanmaraş in south-eastern Turkey last night. She is expected to give evidence when the court again today.

In Britain the case will be reviewed in the High Court next Monday, when Sarah's parents will be invited to offer their views. The official solicitor and Essex county council have been asked to prepare reports.

As a result of wardship proceedings, the court takes over parental responsibility for a child's welfare until the child

is 18 or the court decides otherwise.

The British vice-consul in Ankara, Trudie Pak, also travelled to Kahramanmaraş to notify Sarah of the court order instructing her to return to Britain. Her journey could be delayed if she and her parents refuse to abide by the summons.

While the Cooks are in Turkey, British authorities are powerless, but they could be held in contempt on their return to Britain if they disregard the order. In addition the Turkish authorities could refuse to renew Sarah's 90-day visa, which expires next month.

Mike Leadbetter, director of Essex social services, said he had no indication that either Sarah or her parents, who gave their consent to the marriage, had changed their

view that she should remain in Turkey.

If Sarah returned, he said, it would be for the High Court to decide whether she would be allowed to continue living with her parents or whether the county council would become responsible for her care. Relatives say that if there is any chance of Sarah being placed in care, she is unlikely to hurry back.

In an interview with the Sun yesterday, Sarah threatened to kill herself if Komeagac remained in jail. "I can't stand being apart from him. We just want to be together. He is my husband and I love him."

Her father, Adrian, aged 42, told GMTV: "We have done our utmost for her, to make sure she was safe. She did what she wanted to do — that's her wish. We just went

along with her dreams. But now her dreams have been shattered by the Turkish government."

According to Turkish law governing marriage, although it is frequently ignored, girls cannot marry before the age of 15, but in exceptional circumstances courts can grant permission for 14-year-olds.

Mr Komeagac's lawyer, who has threatened to resist attempts to deport Sarah, could now apply to the courts for permission for the couple to marry legally once Sarah is 14 in September.

Essex police say they are doubtful whether any offence has been committed in Britain, although the role of Sarah's parents in encouraging the relationship with her boyfriend is being scrutinised by lawyers and senior officers.

Snooper spouses get a steam up

Angella Johnson

HOW safe is your mail in the hands of your partner? Not very, according to a survey which shows that six out of 10 people cannot resist reading their spouse's letters, and that 16 per cent resort to steaming them open.

The study, commissioned by the Royal Mail, reveals that while people in the Midlands are the least trusting (73 per cent would read a partner's letters), it is in the south-west that they are most likely to be found holding the envelope over a boiling kettle. Only 8 per cent of folks in Northern Ireland would snoop.

The Gallup poll of 2,000 adults and 1,000 children across Britain shows that while it may be good to talk on the phone, as Bob Hoskins regularly reminds us in British Telecom adverts, a letter is considered better for communicating really important news.

More than seven out of 10 adults prefer to write if they have something important or emotional to say. A huge 84 per cent believe writing a letter shows someone has put time and thought into it.

Londoners top the league for letter-writing (87 per cent compared with 47 per cent in Northern Ireland), but most of such correspondence is gossip and tit-bit.

The survey also suggests that "Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells" has been eclipsed by "Angry from Anglia" in the complaining stakes, with East Anglians composing four times as

many letters of complaint (29 per cent) as people in Northern Ireland (8 per cent).

When asked why they write letters, most people (66 per cent) said it was to keep in touch — surprisingly 72 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds say they enjoy this form of communication, a quarter suggesting it was often easier to express themselves this way.

A high proportion of those interviewed said they valued a personal letter much more than a fax or computer message. The Queen is still the public figure people would most like to get a letter from.

Adam Novak, Royal Mail director and general manager, said: "People believe that if someone writes them a letter, it shows they care enough to have invested time and thought in it."

Mr Novak revealed that the number of letters posted every day to reach a record 70 million, an increase of 10 million in the last five years. The increase is thought to have been helped by a huge increase in the number of outlets selling stamps — a total of 20,000 post offices and 80,000 retail outlets.

On average, more than 800 are posted each second and about 300 full sacks of mail arrive at sorting offices every minute. Britain's 26 million addresses receive an average of 2.8 letters a day.

The United States is the most popular destination for letters from the UK, followed by Australia, Canada, Germany, France, New Zealand, Spain and South Africa.

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One would be forgiven for thinking that the country was divided into anxious middle-class parents willing to sell their souls for the sake of a few GCSEs, and the rest of us, who are so stupid, so poor, so unambitious that we send our children to any old school. One may as well slaughter them in cold blood as let them go somewhere they don't have to wear a uniform.

Suzanne Moore O2 page 6

as China assault
an affront to use, say MPs
BU PA

SELECTION SURVIVOR: Opinions in Committee Room 12 range from resign calls to total support over school choice



For Bernie Grant Gave '100pc support'. Attacked schools in Tottenham which let down his children



Against Alice Mahon If Harman was set on sending her son to a selective school she should resign



For Judith Church London schools poor due to lack of resources and social mix. Any mother would make same choice



Against Clive Soley Education at comprehensive school had helped him cope with life. It was time for her to quit

Harman contrite before Labour jury

Blair denounces 'Tory bastards'

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

HARRIET Harman's dramatic one-hour trial by Labour MPs yesterday saw a denunciation of "Tory bastards" by Tony Blair, stumbling contribution from Ms Harman, and three calls to her face to quit. The Parliamentary Labour Party's debate on its health spokeswoman's decision to send her son, aged 11, to a grammar school, opened in a packed Committee Room 12, when Michael Martin, MP for Glasgow Springburn, said the party was in a wounded state. He said it was right to send your children to the local comprehensive. It enhanced his children's experience, even though they came home most days saying how bad the school was. Judith Church, MP for Dagenham, argued that schools in London were particularly poor due to lack of resources and the social mix. It was very expensive to live in the catchment areas of decent schools in the capital, and she could not understand how Mr Martin felt it enriched his children to send them to inadequate schools. Ms Harman had done what every mother would do. But Alice Mahon, MP for



In the firing line... Harriet Harman braving Tory jibes as she led Labour's NHS attack in the Commons, watched by Tony Blair and John Prescott

his son to the Oratory, a grant-maintained Catholic school, could be the Achilles heel of Labour's education policy. Glenda Jackson, MP for Hampstead and Highgate, did not agree with Ms Harman's decision, but said she had every right to make it. Clive Soley, MP for Ham-

mersmith, said he had been a long-standing and close friend of Ms Harman, but added that she should resign. He had been an inner city comprehensive where violence and bullying had been the norm and it had helped him cope with life, in a way privileged schools did not. In a nervous five-minute

address, Ms Harman said: "I deeply regret that any decision I have taken has given any succour to the Tories and any opportunity for them to attack the Labour Party. I apologise to colleagues for the diversion. I understand the strength of feeling and deeply regret the distress caused. I am opposed to selection." But she added: "I was faced with a difficult choice and each of us has to solve the problems faced by providing good schooling for our children in our own way. I would prefer the school that I had sent my child to not to be selective, but we must deal with the circumstances as they are now."

Primary school concert allows interlude on a difficult day

8.00am: Arrives at BBC Millbank studios for interview on Today programme and BBC Breakfast News. 9.30am: Leaves Westminster to attend nine-year-old daughter Amy's first school concert - where she is making her debut on the cello - at Hamlet junior school, Southwark, the same primary attended by son Joe, at centre of schools controversy. 11.30am: Dashes from office at 7 Millbank with health team colleagues Alan Milburn and Henry McLeish, and fellow frontbencher Clive Soley to attend Commons meeting of Parliamentary Labour Party. 11.06am: Tells around 200 Labour MPs packed into Committee Room 12 that she is sorry for offering "succour" to Tories after having made a "difficult choice." After hour long meeting, works on speech for afternoon debate on National Health Service. 4.15pm: Slips into Commons chamber virtually unnoticed as Prime Minister takes questions on Ireland. Labour benches crowded with frontbenchers and Blair supporters. Tony Blair and John Prescott arrive and sit next to her just as she is due to open Labour-initiated debate. 5.20pm: Shadow Cabinet meeting, which Harman does not attend as she is still involved in debate.

Crisis for spin doctors started with phone call to headmaster

Blair's aides had known of Harman school story before Christmas, but still found it hard to control. Patrick Wintour reports

THE crisis that has given Tony Blair the worst three days of his leadership began with a phone call on Friday from Joe Murphy, the political reporter of the Mail on Sunday. He had picked up that Harriet Harman, the shadow health secretary, was sending her second son Joe to the private school, St Olave's, in Orpington, Kent. He made a check phone call to the headmaster on the Friday afternoon. The headmaster was not totally discreet, but also rang Ms Harman to inform her the press had been on to him. She immediately rang Mr Blair's office where a full red alert was called. His office had known, and privately disapproved, of Ms Harman's decision before Christmas. But Mr Blair had been reassured with a *fait accompli* by Ms Harman. The boy had passed the exam, and was going to the school. She explained that many of his friends would be going to the school and it suited his needs. The only other senior politician who knew at the time was the Labour chief whip, Donald Dewar. Temperamentally, he is not a man to hit the roof, but he certainly looked up at the skies on hearing the news. Mr Blair felt he could not tell Ms Harman to pull the boy out. Equally, if he ordered her to resign from the front bench, the Tories would have had a field day. Ms Harman, then under instruction from Mr Blair's

office, sent urgent paging messages at 1pm to journalists and sympathetic MPs on the Mail to try to get the best presentation possible on the story that night. David Blunkett, the shadow education secretary, furnished some supportive quotes. The Mail on Sunday, its exclusive pre-emptive charge, the story to its sister paper, the Daily Mail. Shadow cabinet members had to be quickly informed of

Northern male MPs have little time for her. They regard her as incompetent and do not recognise her pull on TV. 'Birdbrain' is one of their kinder epithets

Ms Harman's decision and that the news was about to break. John Prescott, the deputy leader and long-term critic of Ms Harman, did not become aware until Saturday, complaining the impression that the Blair office was leaving him out of the big decisions. Many other shadow cabinet members were furious. Some involved in party presentation argued that if they had known about the story, they would have released it when Parliament was not sitting. Instead it had emerged on the worst week possible. For the next week, there were to be four three-line whip votes. All Labour MPs

Embattled spokeswoman defies jibes in health debate

record and the shortage of beds, with new figures showing that 53 hospitals in England, Wales and Scotland are turning patients away. She claimed health care had become "a lottery depending on where you live" with services being pushed into the private sector through a strategy of "creeping privatisation". Labour, she insisted, would invest the £1.5 billion wasted by the Tories on bureaucracy into "frontline services" which would deliver a better deal to patients. Ms Harman issued stern, swift rebukes to several Tory MPs who attempted to destabilise her. She was rewarded with a pat on the arm by the Labour leader, Tony Blair, who showed his support by sitting to her left on the front bench with deputy leader John Prescott. To the surprise of many MPs, the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, launched straight into an attack on what he claimed was Labour's "hypocrisy". He said: "The thing that makes us angry is the distinction between what they say and what they do." He taunted Ms Harman's shadow cabinet colleagues for failing to support her, and said: "What we have seen this week is the irresistible force of parental obligation meeting the immovable object of political correctness." Labour MPs complained that it seemed as though the wrong minister was speaking,

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International peace team suggests two track approach to beat impasse on decommissioning of paramilitary arms

Mitchell puts aside weapons issue

Lawrence Donegan

THE Government should abandon its demand that paramilitaries in Northern Ireland give up their weapons before all-party talks begin, the international commission on the peace process said yesterday.

The three-man panel, headed by former United States senator George Mitchell, concluded that terrorist groups would not give up their arms before negotiations and said any decommissioning of weapons should run in tandem with peace talks.

"Such an approach represents a compromise," the panel said. "If the peace process is to move forward the impasse must be overcome. While both sides have been adamant in their positions, both have repeatedly expressed their desire to move forward. This approach provides them that opportunity."

Any future disarmament should be monitored and verified by a separate body, appointed by the British and Irish governments but independent of both.

The commission also identified a number of other initiatives, including the setting up of an "elective body", which might help strengthen the peace process.

In its 20-page report to the British and Irish governments, Mr Mitchell's team said although relations between the two communities were strained, there was almost universal support for disarmament of all paramilitary groups.

It called on all sides to forget their "vast inventories of historical recrimination" and said: "What is really needed is a decommissioning of mind-sets."

The commission said all parties involved in future peace talks would have to accept six key principles before a political settlement could be reached, including the use of exclusively peaceful means to resolve political issues, disarmament, agreement to abide by the outcome of all-party negotiations and an end to punishment hearings.

It added: "Those who insist on prior decommissioning need to be reassured that the commitment to peaceful and democratic means by those formerly supportive of politically motivated violence is

Principles

All parties must accept six principles before a settlement can be reached:

- The democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues.
- The total disarmament of paramilitary organisations.
- Independent verification of the disarmament process.
- The renunciation of violence and opposition to any other group using force or threat of force to influence negotiations.
- Agreement to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and use of democratic and peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of the outcome with which they may disagree.
- An end to "punishment" killings and beatings.

genuine and irreversible and that the threat or use of such violence will not be invoked to influence the process of negotiations or to change any agreed settlement.

"Those who have been persuaded to abandon violence for the peaceful political path need to be reassured that a meaningful and inclusive process of negotiation is genuinely being offered to address the legitimate concerns of their traditions and the need for new political arrangements with which all can identify."

"Clearly, this new approach which creates the present opportunity," they said.

Mr Mitchell and his colleagues, Canadian general John de Chastelain and the former Finnish prime minister Harri Holkeri, published their findings yesterday after meetings with officials, politicians and church leaders.

They had found relations between the two traditions in Northern Ireland still hostile, yet it was clear the vast majority of the people wanted to turn away from the past. "There is a powerful desire for peace. It is that desire which creates the present opportunity," they said.

"Notwithstanding 'punishment' killings and beatings, observance of the ceasefire should not be devalued. It is a significant factor which must be given due weight in assessing the commitment of paramilitaries to full and verifiable decommissioning."



George Mitchell, flanked by John de Chastelain and Harri Holkeri, in Belfast yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: CRISPIN RODWELL

Trust built on compromise holds key to peace

Mitchell report offers hope of wider 'twin-track' dialogue

David Sharrock
Ireland Correspondent

THE Mitchell Report's admirers claim it has mapped a decent route to a final settlement in Northern Ireland, but Irish nationalists will be inclined to complain that John Major has suddenly seized the wheel and changed destination with

his endorsement of Unionist proposals for a new Northern Ireland "elective body".

This round, it appears, has gone to David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist Party leader. Certainly John Hume, the SDLP leader, lost no time in complaining that Mr Major was buying votes to keep himself in power.

But the Prime Minister's initiative came as no surprise

to Irish nationalists, and in Dublin some viewed it as a logical trade-off — reasoning it would have been unimaginable for the Government and Mr Trimble to concede on the issue of weapons without getting something back.

Mr Hume's view is that assemblies have come and gone in the past 25 years and solved nothing; it is time for the parties and the two governments to negotiate a deal and then submit it to the people. Unionists, meanwhile, merely want a return to the old Stormont days as a way of

resisting stronger north-south ties through new all-Ireland institutions.

But John Bruton, the Irish prime minister, said Mr Major's announcement was something that could be discussed on the political side of the so-called "twin-track" approach running until the end of February, involving preliminary dialogue while the Mitchell report investigates the arms issue. This is, though, a come-on to Mr Trimble, who has resisted invitations to talk to Dublin.

Although Mr Trimble said

Divide and rule

Northern Ireland's troubled electoral history

Parliament elected at Stormont, governing the province, following the partition of Ireland. Successive administrations formed by Unionist majority, with nationalists and republicans intermittently boycotting proceedings.

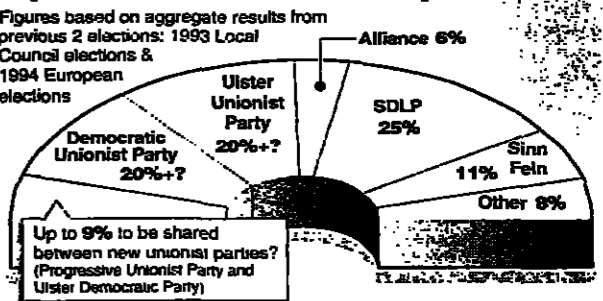
Direct rule imposed by Westminster after Bloody Sunday shootings and upsurge in IRA violence. Stormont parliament dissolved.

Power sharing executive of local parties elected but collapsed within four months amidst the loyalist-inspired Ulster workers strike.

78 member assembly elected by proportional representation but proved unworkable. Nationalist SDLP took part in election but refused to take their seats.

Mitchell commission proposes an "elective body" for further negotiations to "contribute to the building of confidence".

A possible convention line-up



● Elections would be for party delegations to a new negotiating body. Based on proportional representation, it would — according to the Mitchell report — be "within the three-strand structure" of the peace process.

● The body would exist for a limited duration and provide a forum for, or means of, moving the process forward into full inter-party talks. It would not be an assembly to govern the province.

● Sinn Féin and the SDLP have already criticised plans for any elected assembly which they fear would be unionist dominated.

Reactions from fury to support

Sinn Féin

THE brevity of a statement issued by Gerry Adams said it all in his reaction to the Mitchell Report. "John Major has effectively dumped the twin-track process," he said.

"He is quite clearly acting in bad faith by swapping one precondition to all-party talks for another. John Major has now adopted an entirely Unionist agenda in an attempt to buy Unionist votes in Westminster."

Off-stage, senior republicans were first stunned then furious at the "stunt" pulled by Mr Major. The twin-track approach of an independent body on arms and prelimi-

Unionists

IT WAS a good day for David Trimble, who started it by expressing disappointment over the failure of the Mitchell Commission to solve the impasse in the peace process but ended it with his view that an elected body as the only way forward seemingly endorsed by Mr Major.

"In view of the refusal of Sinn Féin/IRA to make the necessary moves with regard to weapons, we regard it as the only way forward," Mr Trimble told the House of Commons.

Earlier his colleague, Ken Maginnis, gave the Mitchell Report a cautious welcome, which gave rise to speculation that the Unionists have come out of yesterday's developments in an even stronger position than they had hoped for.

But the Irish Government's response is contingent upon Mr Trimble's meeting them for talks, something which he has so far refused to do.

It is likely that unless he is prepared, and quickly, to accept an invitation from the Irish foreign minister, Dick Spring, who has already expressed his view that an election is a "flawed" plan, for a meeting then their limited support will be lost.

SDLP

THE bitterest exchanges in the Commons yesterday reflected John Hume's memories of being a member of three failed assemblies in Northern Ireland and his openly-voiced suspicion that Mr Major was trying to buy time and buy Unionist votes to keep his government afloat.

His deputy in the mainly Catholic Social and Democratic Labour Party, Seamus Mallon, was less cautious but warned that Mr Major had ignored the

main thrust of the Mitchell Report — that talks and decommissioning should proceed side-by-side.

Both were angry last night, but senior Tories were cheered by their refusal to rule out the assembly completely. "Give them 72 hours," said one.

There were Tory cries of "cheep" when Mr Hume obliquely taunted Mr Major with risking innocent lives by this tactic and went on to remind MPs that the Mitchell Commission had not positively endorsed the idea of an assembly, which was "outside its remit".

Opposition

TONY Blair and Paddy Ashdown voiced immediate Opposition support for the Mitchell Report and for John Major's formula for side-stepping the weapons stalemate with an elected assembly. But Mr Blair also hinted that if the premier's options did not work he should try others.

Insisting that the issues involved "should transcend normal party politics", the Labour leader stressed the importance of "confidence-building" measures and offered help in passing speedy

legislation to create an assembly.

Mr Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, praised the courage of all involved, and proposed a special amnesty for stocks of Semtex.

Labour's Northern Ireland spokesman, Mo Mowlam, supports an assembly if it proves an effective means of ending the deadlock, though Ham-mersmith MP Clive Soley voiced nationalist fears that it would mean a return to "structures that have failed in the past" and Tony Benn insisted that the peace process in South Africa and Palestine had not required prior arms decommissioning.

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Ceasefire 'saves shops £220m'

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

THE IRA ceasefire has brought savings of more than £220 million for UK shops and stores, according to figures published yesterday.

But retail outlets were nevertheless targets of more than 8,000 terrorist incidents, mainly connected with animal rights, the latest annual survey of the British Retail Consortium has found.

The cost of crime against retailers has fallen overall by 28 per cent but robberies and thefts have increased.

David Maclean, Home Office minister, said the figures were as impressive as those for the

best police forces in terms of cutting crime. It proved that retailers were not helpless in the face of crime; if they "can do it, everyone can".

The survey is based on responses from companies trading through 83,000 outlets, with a combined annual turnover of £81 billion.

It shows losses from terrorism in 1994/95 to be down by 88 per cent — from £225 million in 1993/94 to £24.9 million last year. But retailers faced 8,140 incidents of terrorism, as defined by the survey, including bombs, bomb threats, incendiary attacks and attacks by animal rights activists.

The 28 per cent fall in the overall cost of crimes against retailers — £1.5 billion in

1994/95 compared with £2.1 billion the previous year — came at a cost of £225 million for prevention measures.

Thefts totalling 5,390,341 represented a 12 per cent rise. The number of customers referred to police was up by 250,000 to 783,861. Staff theft or fraud was down 24 per cent to 26,144 incidents; 41 per cent of employees involved were referred to police.

There were 15,838 robberies and till snatches, up 17 per cent and the figure of most concern to retailers, including fraud, was up 17 per cent to 2,319 arson attacks, a fall of 2 per cent.

Violence against staff remained high, said David Quarmby, joint managing director of J Sainsbury plc and

chairman of the Home Office Retail Action Group for Crime Prevention, at the survey's launch in London.

A total of 11,540 staff suffered physical violence, down 4 per cent, but threats of violence increased to nearly 100,000 and 342,716 staff suffered verbal abuse.

Fraud losses amounted to £22 million. Cheque fraud was down by 88 per cent and plastic card fraud by 60 per cent. Loss from counterfeit notes totalled £1 million.

The report recommends making thieves reimburse their victims.

Retail Crime Costs, 1994/95; BRC, Bedford House, 68 Fulham High St, SW6 3JW; £25.

Taipei's campaign for greater international recognition has provoked clear threats of military action, Patrick Tyler in Beijing reports

Beijing warns of war for 'one China'

THE Chinese leadership has sent unusually explicit warnings to the Clinton administration that it has completed plans for a limited attack on Taiwan which could be mounted in the weeks after President Lee Teng-hui's expected victory in the island's first democratic presidential election in March.

This sabre-rattling is apparently intended to persuade the United States to rein in Taiwan and Mr Lee, whose push for greater international recognition for the island of 21 million people has a drive for independence. While no one familiar with the threat thinks that China

The People's Liberation Army 'had plans to launch one conventional missile a day against Taiwan for 30 days'

Chas Freeman Jr, who visited China this winter for discussions with senior Chinese officials.

On January 4, after returning to Washington, he told Mr Clinton's national security adviser, Anthony Lake, that the People's Liberation Army had prepared plans to launch one conventional missile a day against Taiwan for 30 days.

This warning followed similar statements relayed to administration officials by John Lewis, a Stanford University political scientist who fre-

quently meets senior Chinese military figures here.

The warnings do not mean that an attack on Taiwan is certain or imminent. Rather, a number of China specialists say, China hopes through "credible preparations" for an attack to intimidate the Taiwanese and influence US policy towards Taiwan.

The goal, they say, is to force Taiwan to abandon Mr Lee's campaign, including his effort to get Taiwan a seat at the United Nations, and to send high-profile foreign visits by Mr Lee.

If the threats fail to rein in Mr Lee, a number of experts say, China could resort to force.

Since last summer, when the White House allowed Mr Lee to visit the US, the Chinese leadership has stepped up its attacks on the Taiwan leader, accusing him of seeking to "split the motherland" and undermine the "one China" policy which has been the bedrock of relations between Beijing and its estranged province since 1949.

Last month a senior Chinese foreign ministry official

said privately that China's obvious preparations for military action were intended to head off an unwanted conflict.

"We have been trying to do all we can to avoid a scenario in which we are confronted in the end with no other option but a military one," he said. If China did not succeed in changing Taiwan's course, "then I am afraid there is going to be a war".

Mr Freeman passed on the most recent warning during a meeting Mr Lake had called with non-governmental China specialists.

Participants said his presentation was arresting. Preparations for a missile attack on Taiwan, including the selection of targets, were complete and awaited a final decision by the politburo, he told them.

He quoted a Chinese official as saying that China could act militarily against Taiwan without fear of US intervention because US leaders "care more about Los Angeles than they do about Taiwan" — a statement that Mr Freeman described as an indirect threat to use nuclear weapons against the US.

Mr Freeman confirmed the gist of his report in remarks re-telegraphing his belief that while Beijing clearly preferred negotiation to combat

there was a new sense of urgency about its wish to end Taiwan's quest for "independent international status".

He said Mr Lee's behaviour in the weeks following his re-election would determine whether Beijing's Communist Party leaders felt they must act "by direct military means".

In recent months, Mr Freeman said, he had relayed a number of warnings to US government officials. "I have addressed senior Chinese who told me [that China] would sacrifice millions of men and 'entire cities' to assure the unity of China and who opined that the United States would not make comparable sacrifices." — New York Times.

Police break up subway squat

Eric Talmadge in Tokyo

HUNDREDS of police dragged homeless men kicking and screaming from a central Tokyo shantytown yesterday, an unusually harsh crackdown which shocked passers-by.

The mêlée capped months of rising tension between the city authority and those living in "cardboard villages" — a row of shacks several hundred yards long in an underpass.

By yesterday afternoon most of the homeless had left or had been forcibly removed, and only three arrests were reported. But the clash focused attention on a social problem most Japanese — who take great pride in their country's affluence — would prefer to ignore.

"I am very disappointed that force had to be used," said Yukio Aochima, Tokyo's governor. "But we intend to do our best to help rehabilitate these people."

The authorities are trying to house the tunnel dwellers in a temporary shelter, but this will be closed after two months. Mr Aochima said officials hoped to "talk to the homeless to better understand their situation".

Few of them are likely to co-operate, however. A hall of eggs, beer cans and tin buckets rained down on the police as they broke through the barricade of plywood and concrete blocks put up by the homeless and their supporters. The police repeated that message through megaphones.

"You have become a nuisance to the neighbourhood," blared one. "This is not a place for people to live."

The most recent official estimate is that there are less than 3,500 homeless people throughout Tokyo, which has a population of 12 million. But private fare groups say there could be 10,000 or more. — AP.

eral high-rise office blocks with one of the city's busiest railway stations.

The plan was immediately criticised by campaign groups as an excuse to remove the men.

"The city has never tried to understand us," said Mitsuru Koki, who recently moved out of the underpass and survives on state benefits. "Most Japanese don't think of homeless people, or people who don't work, as fellow human beings."

Begging is rare in Japan, and there is hardly any contact between the homeless and the pedestrians, mostly white-collar workers, who pass them each day.

The clash focused attention on a problem Japan prefers to ignore

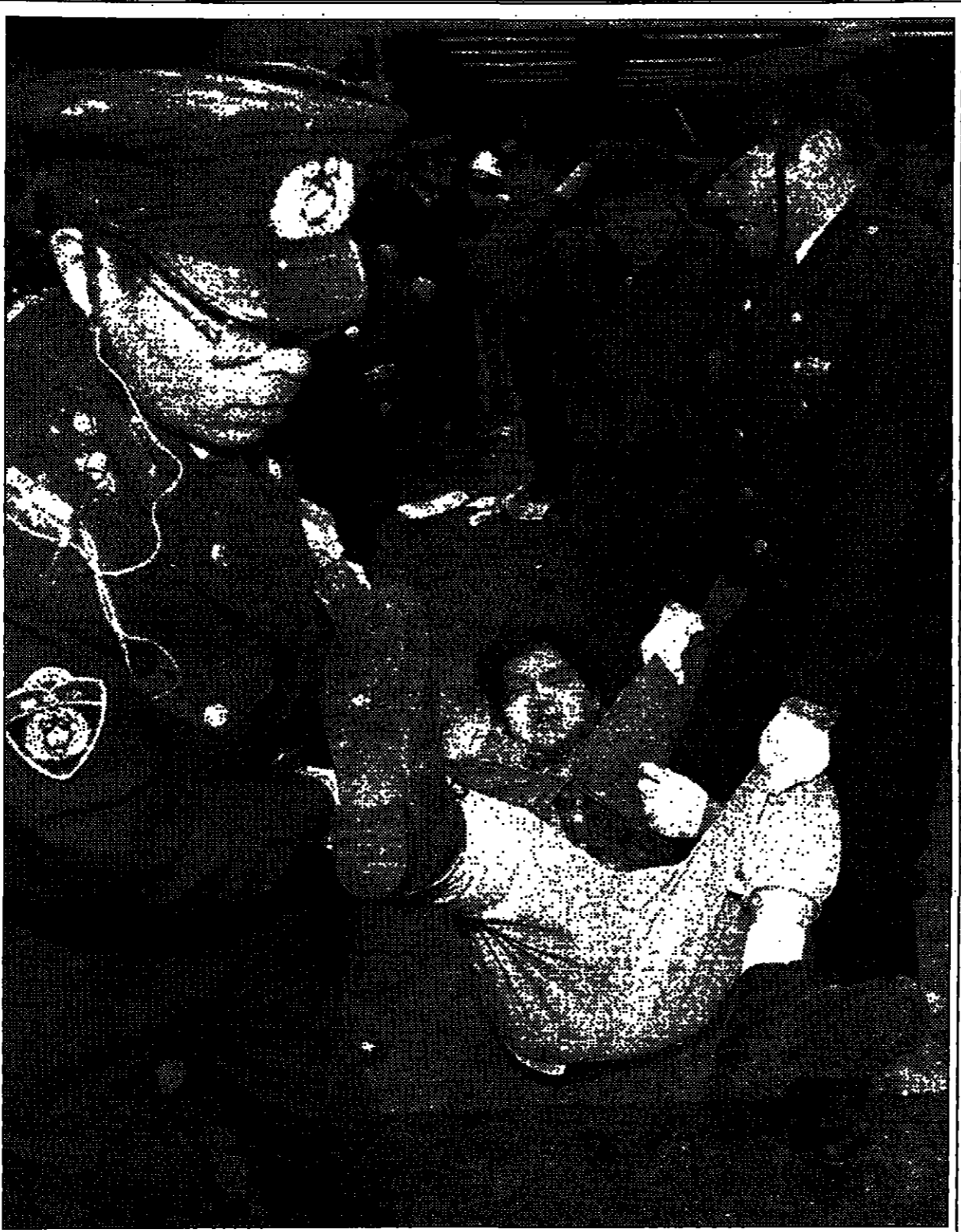
None the less, the underpass community had long been a conspicuous pocket of poverty in Tokyo, a city with few slums.

About 200 people, mostly older unemployed men or day labourers, lived there, and hundreds more lived nearby. Although their number fluctuated, it is believed to have gradually increased in recent years because of a prolonged recession.

Shopkeepers near the cardboard village had long complained that the stench and squalor of the shacks scared off customers. The police repeated that message through megaphones.

"You have become a nuisance to the neighbourhood," blared one. "This is not a place for people to live."

The most recent official estimate is that there are less than 3,500 homeless people throughout Tokyo, which has a population of 12 million. But private fare groups say there could be 10,000 or more. — AP.



Can't go, won't go... Tokyo police drag away a homeless protester during yesterday's eviction. PHOTOGRAPH: ITSUO INOUE

Comeback Kid slays them

Against all odds, Bill Clinton's state of the union speech was a hit, reports Martin Walker

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton scored top marks yesterday as the American public and media dismissed the presidential state of the union address, delivered in the teeth of his wife's highly-publicised troubles over the Whitewater affair.

"The president was at his best," Tom Gilliam, a Republican county chairman in Florida, said yesterday. "What struck me was the physical strength and vigour of a man in campaign mode — while Senator [Robert] Dole's reply was lame and tired."

He added: "Republicans were calling round to each other after the speeches, and kind of wept on each other's shoulders. Clinton is going to be very, very hard to beat. And I think everyone in the country, whatever their politics, took their hat off to him for that moving tribute to his wife."

During Tuesday night's address the president departed from his script to look up at his wife in the balcony, and salute her as "a wonderful wife and magnificent mother and a great First Lady". Their daughter, Chelsea, led a standing ovation, and courtesy left the Republicans little option but to rise also.

In Iowa, which holds the first presidential caucus of the election in just two weeks' time, Republicans were depressed by the performance of Mr Dole, their elderly front-runner, against Mr Clinton's confident borrowing of their better campaign themes.

"If Clinton vs Dole is the match in November, we are in trouble," said Christopher Rens, a member of the Iowa legislature. "Clinton reached into his bag of tricks and pulled out something for everybody. He sounded like a Republican. Dole didn't project a future under Republicans."

A straw poll on Connecticut Avenue in Washington yesterday revealed that most people had watched Mr Clinton's speech, and found something to admire. Everyone recalled his statement about his wife.

Lutifer Willis, a caretaker, said: "I liked what he said about bringing back school week's raid were handed over to the Chechen rebels.

Some of the hostages had been seized on January 9, when the rebels herded 2,000 people into a hospital in the Dagestan town of Kizlyar.

Others had been seized in the village of Pervomayskaya near the Chechen-Dagestan border, where the convoy of rebels and hostages was surrounded by Russian troops.

Six Russian soldiers were killed and two wounded in attacks by separatist rebels on Russian positions in Chechnya in the 24 hours up to yesterday afternoon, Interfax said. — Reuter.

uniforms, so kids stop shooting each other for fancy jackets. And then all the extra cops on the street — that's good stuff."

Stephen Ribachonek, a financial officer, said: "I'll vote for him again after that speech. He came across as genuine, while the Republicans seem to have a hidden agenda."

But Mr Dole's speech in reply to the president's address, which suggested Mr Clinton always promised more than he could deliver, provoked some reaction.

"Clinton promised us health care, and that sank without trace, and he promised to be the candidate of change, and nothing's changed, that I can see, so I don't believe a word he says," said Jason Wild, an investment analyst.

"I think the president has moved so far towards the Republicans that we can't really call him a Democrat

'Republicans were calling round after and wept on each other's shoulders'

any more," said Philip Moser, a retired librarian.

Nyrita Merrill, a black manicurist who was registered to vote for the first time last year, said: "Nothing the president said made me want to vote for him, except that he was so sweet to his wife. But I wouldn't vote Republican."

Mr Clinton's statement that "the era of big government is over" infuriated Republicans watching him claim the credit for what they see as their achievement in wringing from him a promise to balance the budget in seven years.

"The speech was about one quarter Ronald Reagan, about two-thirds Lyndon Johnson and about 10 per cent George McGovern," said Newt Gingrich, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. "Anybody could read the part they liked and be thrilled, or read the part they didn't like and be worried."

The media overwhelmingly declared Mr Clinton's speech a success, and Mr Dole's a disappointment. This was partly because expectations were rather low for a presidency overshadowed by the ordeal faced on Friday by Mrs Clinton, who has been subpoenaed to testify before the Whitewater grand jury.

News in brief

US food agency approves zero-calorie fat

THE United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) yesterday approved America's first zero-calorie artificial fat.

The product, olestra, developed by Procter & Gamble, can be used to replace the fat in crisps and other snacks, provided they carry a warning on the label that it might cause unexpected side effects.

Critics had asked the FDA to keep olestra off the market because it can have unpleasant gastro-intestinal effects, including diarrhoea, and can deplete the body's stock of certain vitamins and nutrients.

But the FDA decided olestra was safe enough for consumers to decide for themselves whether to eat it.

Olestra is a synthetic chemical made of sugar and vegetable oil. Its molecules are too large and tightly packed to digest, allowing it to pass

through the body without clogging arteries or remaining as body fat.

One ounce of crisps has 150 calories, but olestra crisps have just 60 calories.

But olestra can act as a laxative, causing gastro-intestinal disturbances, and can rob the body of vitamins A, D, E and K. The FDA is requiring Procter & Gamble to supplement foods containing olestra with the four vitamins. — AP.

Iraq opposes US talks site

Iraq would like its talks with the United Nations on selling limited amounts of oil to be held outside the United States, diplomats in Baghdad said yesterday.

They said Iraq wanted the talks held away from the clamour of media and direct US supervision. — Reuter.

Bahrain arrests

A London-based opposition group claimed yesterday that at least 2,000 people have been arrested in dawn raids and during clashes with police since renewed unrest erupted in Bahrain last week. — AP.

Chechen rebels release 45 hostages taken in Dagestan

CHECHEN rebels yesterday released 45 hostages seized in a raid in the Russian region of Dagestan, Inter-Tass news agency said, quoting a Dagestani official.

Buses with 45 hostages crossed the Chechen-Dagestan border at around 1700 Moscow time (2pm GMT) in the direction of Khasavyurt, it quoted the head of the administration of the Khasavyurt district as saying.

Interfax news agency said the hostages had been handed over to Dagestani officials in the eastern Chechen town of Novogrozny. The bodies of 42 rebels killed in last

French police eye cybercafe

FRENCH police said yesterday they had paid an informal visit to a provincial "cybercafe" after it fed into the worldwide Internet computer network a banned book on the late President François Mitterrand's battle with cancer.

The book, which was put on the Internet by the owner of the Café Pascal Barraud, was banned at the request of Mitterrand's family on the grounds of medical secrecy and privacy laws.

It was written by Mitterrand's doctor Claude Guibler and says the president lied about his illness for 11 years.

Publishers Plon said they were against the move to put *Le Grand Secret* (The Big Secret) on the Internet.

The police inspector said the visit was "a reconnaissance visit" rather than a judicial act. — Reuter.

US to help North Korea

THE United States is ready to send humanitarian aid to North Korea, where 130,000 people are reported to face starvation, a senior US official said yesterday.

Winston Lord, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, told a Manila news conference he would discuss North Korea's plight with Japanese and South Korean officials in Hawaii.

Mr Lord said UN missions to North Korea were reporting serious shortages. "We have to take this as being a very credible problem."

The International Federation of the Red Cross has said that more international aid is needed to feed North Koreans on the brink of starvation and living in makeshift shelters in bitter weather.

Mr Lord said: "I would hope we could agree in responding in a humanitarian way." — Reuter.

Farrakhan in Libya

The Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, held talks with visiting US black activist Louis Farrakhan yesterday. — Reuter.

Bad blood

Ethiopian immigrants were enraged yesterday to learn that Israel's blood bank had for years been accepting their donations but disposing of their blood for fear of the Aids virus. A newspaper showed a picture of a blood unit marked: "Do not use because donor is from Ethiopia." — Reuter.

Ever seen a real Mexican wave?



Well now's your chance. Win a trip to Mexico for two, this Saturday in The Guardian.

Sauna trauma as sight of naked ladies has Finnish men steaming

UNACCUSTOMED to the sight of bare female bodies in their traditionally segregated saunas, overheated Finnish men have behaved so badly that a sports complex offering mixed bathing has been forced to jettison the sexes, writes Jon Henley in Helsinki.

"We wanted an international ambience, the first mixed sauna in town," said Mona Helin, a sales manager at the complex in Toolo, a Helsinki suburb. "They do it in other countries, why not here? We were obviously naive."

Finnish take an average 1.5 saunas a week. But men

and women rarely bathe together unless they are related, and the novelty of a mixed sauna was clearly too much for some male visitors.

"When they first started wandering across to the women, we put up a railing," Ms Helin said. "They walked round it, so we built a low partition. They jumped that too. Now we've got a five-foot high plate-glass wall across the whole room and some of them still manage to get over."

Ms Helin said the sauna was refusing to admit men who try to cross the barrier. "It's either that or an electric fence," she said.

European plan aims to pull UN back from bankruptcy

BRTAIN and France unveiled a plan yesterday to resolve the United Nations' financial crisis, involving an increase in contributions from Japan and Germany.

Put forward on behalf of the European Union, the detailed proposals opened negotiations on revamping the UN's finances by the summer.

The talks are part of a wider discussion about overhauling the UN, including the enlargement of the Security Council.

The European plan comes amid warnings that the UN — hobbled by late payment, especially by the United States — will run out of money in April.

The reform of current contributions to the UN's regular and peacekeeping budgets is an attempt to meet Washington's objections that it is paying too much towards peacekeeping. Partly because of this, the US is \$1.2 billion (£750 million) in arrears.

Under yesterday's proposals, American contributions towards peacekeeping would drop from 31 per cent to

28.75 per cent of the peace-keeping budget.

The difference would be picked up mainly by Japan, whose share would rise from 15.5 to 17.7 per cent.

Its contributions to the regular budget would rise correspondingly.

The contribution of Britain, which gives about \$160 million towards the regular and peacekeeping budgets, would be reduced slightly. Peacekeeping contributions from the G-77 bloc of 132 developing countries would rise from 1.9 per cent to 7.0 per cent.

British officials argue that the plan is fair because it proposes an increase in contributions from countries with high economic growth rates — such as the Asian tigers. Conversely, Russia, which has suffered grave economic deterioration, would enjoy a big drop in its contributions.

Because of the financial crisis, the UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has been forced to fund emergency peacekeeping funds to finance routine expenses.

The crux of the problem remains late US payments. The Republican congress is in no hurry to pay up.

One-w
González
associate
faces 'dirty
war' trial

Bonn battle to halve jobless

Ian Traynor in Bonn

CHANCELLOR Helmut Kohl yesterday launched an ambitious campaign to tackle the structural crisis confronting Germany's sluggish economy and to halve unemployment, now approaching 4 million, or 10 per cent of the workforce, by the end of the decade.

A jobs summit in Bonn bringing together key government figures, trade union leaders, and industrial bosses approved an eight-page manifesto pledging all sides to a consensus in the battle for jobs and competitiveness and in the wider long-term task of retooling the country's social and economic model for the next century.

"This is an important, positive signal, a good signal for everyone in Germany," said Friedrich Kohl, head of the chancellor's office.

But amid an increasing sense of job insecurity, business gloom, and political paralysis, the challenges of converting yesterday's verbal assurances into concrete results look daunting.

The government and both sides of industry committed themselves to the timetable for a single European currency, scheduled for launching at the beginning of 1999, and said it would boost growth and jobs across the continent.

The proposals outlined yesterday included tax breaks for new businesses, company tax changes, pensions and job training reform, and easier access to risk capital.

The unions promised wage restraint in return for employers taking on more workers. The vague wish-list is to be

debated next week when the cabinet unveils the fine print of its "action programme" for jobs and its report on the economy for 1996.

The summit comes as Europe's key economy moves towards stagnation, if not recession, threatening to drag the rest of Europe, notably France, with it and jeopardising the best-laid plans for monetary union by 1999, despite the ritual affirmations of faith in the project in Germany.

Falling consumption, a reluctance of foreigners to invest in Germany's high-price economy, the flight of capital and jobs abroad for the same reasons, an overvalued mark that is hurting exports and jobs, all leave the government with little room for manoeuvre.

The constraints are worsened by the public spending cuts needed to avert a budget deficit down from 1995's 3.6 per cent to make the single-currency deficit ceiling of 3 per cent by the end of next year.

That leaves little to spare to prime the economy and boost jobs and growth.

Independent analysts expect only 1 per cent growth this year, although next week's government report is expected to be a bit more optimistic.

Unemployment is scraping the 4 million point and rising, but the real numbers of those out of work is nearer 6 million.

"The time for talking is past," said Günther Rexrodt, the economic minister.

The manifesto said: "There is an acute need for action. That is shown by the low foreign investment in Germany while German companies are increasingly moving abroad."

Russia set to join Council of Europe despite Chechen war

John Palmer in Brussels

THE Council of Europe will today approve Russia's membership of the 38-country organisation, which was set up to advance democracy and human rights. But international concern about Russia's human rights record and its war against the Chechens increased yesterday after the resignation of a leading human rights official from President Boris Yeltsin's administration.

European governments want the parliamentary assembly of the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe to accept Russia as a member in the hope that it will shore up President Yeltsin's standing before the presidential election this summer. Mr Yeltsin said this week that a refusal would deal a blow to pro-Western reformers, but he also vowed to step up the war against the Chechens.

The Russian government applied last year to join the council, which is sometimes seen as an organisation to help countries prepare politically for eventual European Union membership. But its application was suspended in protest at the Russian army's brutal storming of Grozny.

At the same time a council investigation commission reported that serious human rights abuses persisted in the Russian legal and police system.

Last September the council's assembly agreed to lift the suspension after the tentative ceasefire in Chechnya. It is to vote on Russia's application today.

But the human rights advocate Sergei Kovalev, who resigned from the Russian government this week, called on the council to demand a Russian pledge to begin peace talks with Chechen separatists and withdraw troops from Chechnya as conditions of entry.

"A negative vote would create a political curtain between the two parts of Europe," said the Communist Party leader, Gennady Zyuganov. "Russia is part of Europe, a legitimate child and not a bastard."

Poland's PM resigns after spy charges inquiry starts

Matthew Brzezinski in Gdansk

THE Polish prime minister, Jozef Oleksy, resigned yesterday after military prosecutors decided to launch an official inquiry into allegations that he spied for Moscow.

"A propaganda uproar against me and my party is doing harm to Poland's good name," Mr Oleksy said on television last night, appearing emotional and angry. He said: "In the name of reasons of state, I am resigning."

The resignation of Mr Oleksy, a former communist, came as no surprise after weeks of acrimonious and often wild accusations against the leftwing coalition government.

After military prosecutors said yesterday that alleged evidence of his contacts with foreign agents justified a formal investigation, his departure was widely expected.

"I resign because I am innocent," Mr Oleksy told Poles. "I don't want anyone to suspect that I want to hide behind a high government position to cover anything up. I do not fear the investigation. I need it."

He was parliament's Speaker before he became prime minister early last year. The military prosecutor, Wlodek Ruzicki, said that if the investigation resulted in formal charges, prosecutors would seek the lifting of his parliamentary immunity. The maximum penalty he could face is death.

Mr Oleksy said the accusations, which first surfaced in December as Lech Walesa handed over the presidency to his party colleague Aleksander Kwasniewski, were part of "a brutal fit for power" by those who lost the elections.

He has, however, admitted having close social contacts with Vladimir Alganov, a long-serving Soviet diplomat in Warsaw who turned out to be a KGB colonel.

Mr Walesa said yesterday that the wider issue was the close ties that ex-communists had forged with Soviet officials when Warsaw was Moscow's satellite. These, he warned, could now be exploited by the Russians.



Shared grief... Sadika Hajrull, right, a Muslim, is told by her sister that their mother died during Sadika's three-year incarceration by a Serb woman. PHOTOGRAPH WADE GODDARD

One-woman camp frees its sole prisoner

Julian Borger in Obrovac reports on a Serb mother's long war of attrition

FOR three long years, the cottage at the crest of the hill in this Serb hamlet near Sarajevo was Bosnia's smallest, strangest prison camp. Under its red-tiled roof, a single jailer watched over a single prisoner. Both were women made desperate by the war.

It was like a dark, Balkan fairy tale. Tomanjia Kukricar — aged 72, white-haired but tough — would come to the door of the house, wiping her hands on her apron, smiling as she ushered guests inside.

She would ply them with baked potatoes, biscuits and brandy while, a few feet below, her prisoner of war spent the night in a damp basement.

Sadika Hajrull, aged 52, is a Muslim who had the misfortune of living in a Serb suburb of Sarajevo when the war

started. The Muslim-led government imprisoned Mrs Kukricar's daughter, a Serb activist, so the Serb police came looking for a hostage. They found Mrs Hajrull and took her to Mrs Kukricar.

They said her incarceration would last only five days, but that was back in February 1993. Mrs Hajrull was freed on Tuesday night as a small but significant part of the Bosnian peace process.

Yesterday she sat weeping at her sister's house in Sarajevo. Her sister Izeta had just told her that their mother had died a few days earlier. Mrs Hajrull had been so overjoyed about her freedom, the previous evening that Izeta could not bear to break the news.

Their sick mother had tried to hang on long enough to see Sadika. Under the Dayton peace agreement, all prisoners were supposed to have been freed on Friday, but at the last moment the deal faltered and only 225 were released. Sadika was not among them, and it broke her mother's heart, Izeta said.

Until the end, Mrs Kukricar had refused to free her cap-

US troops on alert for 'extremist attacks'

UNITED STATES troops in Bosnia are on "high alert" for possible extremist attacks, the defence secretary, William Perry, said yesterday.

The order follows a warning that extremists, including an American believed to be in Bosnia, might

launch an attack. Mr Perry said there were no reports of "terrorists or extremists actually trying to get into US facilities".

US intelligence indicated increased activity by Islamic volunteers in Bosnia and suggested that an American — identified as

Kevin Holt or Cleven Holt — who had had contact with extremist Muslim groups, might be in Bosnia.

Mr Perry said the US would not train and arm Bosnian government forces until all foreign troops, including Islamic volunteers, had left. — Reuter.

Over the three years in the cottage in Obrovac, the two women did the housework and the gardening together. They sat by the wood stove in winter and talked. A strange relationship developed in which the Muslim woman's role alternated between prisoner, servant and companion.

On Tuesday, before they knew Mrs Hajrull would be freed, they talked about the past like any couple who had lived through hard times together, interrupting each other, arguing about dates and facts. But when the Serb left the room, Mrs Hajrull pointed to her jaw and mouth: "She beat me."

Looking back on her years in captivity, Mrs Hajrull was close to tears. "I was afraid for my nerves, that I'd go crazy before I was let go."

Her husband was arrested at the start of the war and has been missing ever since. For her former jailer, she wished peace of mind. "I want to ask from the bottom of my heart that her daughter will be released and that everyone will be free. Neither was her daughter."

She often vented her anger and frustration on her prisoner. But yesterday Mrs Hajrull — pressed by a Bosnian journalist to accuse her of torture — found herself defending her former jailer.

"It was only when she lost her nerve, and I wasn't really hurt," Mrs Hajrull said.

"Sometimes she was good, when she was relaxed. She would say I was not guilty, but neither was her daughter."

Red Cross workers said yesterday that Mrs Hajrull's release could have broken a logjam in the complex negotiations over prisoners of war. Radojka Kukricar could be out in the next 48 hours, they said. But Mrs Kukricar had heard it all before.

"If my daughter is not released in the next three days, and anyone comes here and it is not my daughter, I

will kill them, and then I will kill myself," she cried.

Mrs Kukricar is not a woman to take lightly. She keeps a sharpened axe behind the kitchen door.

Red Cross workers said yesterday that Mrs Hajrull's release could have broken a logjam in the complex negotiations over prisoners of war. Radojka Kukricar could be out in the next 48 hours, they said. But Mrs Kukricar had heard it all before.

"If my daughter is not released in the next three days, and anyone comes here and it is not my daughter, I

González associate faces 'dirty war' trial

Adela Goech in Madrid

THE Spanish supreme court yesterday charged a former interior minister and close associate of the prime minister, Felipe González, with involvement in the 1980s "dirty war" against Basque separatists, severely damaging the ruling Socialist Party's electoral prospects.

José Barrionuevo will be tried after the election for kidnapping, misappropriation of state funds and membership of an illegal armed band. The court found evidence of his involvement in the 1983 kidnapping of a French businessman by the Anti-Terrorist Liberation Groups (GAL) — a hired gunman who killed 27 people during the "dirty war".

The severity of the charges against Mr Barrionuevo, interior minister during the period the GAL gunmen were active, is a heavy blow to the Socialists, who are trailing in the polls with six weeks to go to the general election.

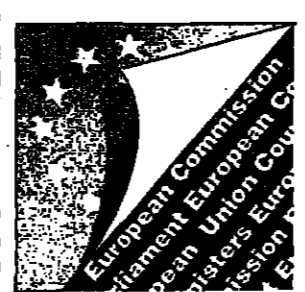
The investigating magistrate, Eduardo Mener, had been expected to bring one charge at most against him, but the former minister now faces up to 40 years' prison. His conviction would have serious repercussions for Mr González, establishing a direct link between the government and the GAL.

The prime minister has denied that he or any member of his administration knew about or condoned GAL activities and has said Mr Barrionuevo is innocent.

The Socialist Party said there were no plans to drop Mr Barrionuevo from the list of candidates in the March 8 election.

The indictment brings the affair closer to Mr González than ever before — a campaign gift for the opposition and its leader, José María Aznar, who opinion polls say will win.

The bureaucrats we love to hate



In the last of a series on European Union institutions, Stephen Bates takes a look at the Commission

THERE is no easier way to rouse a red-blooded British audience to indignation than to cite rules on bent bananas or the famous (and mythical) caramel directive, allegedly longer than the Declaration of Independence.

So it comes as something of a disappointment to discover the European Commission residing in a fairly small office block — the size of one of the more obscure Whitehall departments — in a suburban Brussels side street.

The commission moved to the Breydel building five years ago after the grander Berlaymont down the road was found to be slowly suffocating the civil servants in asbestos dust.

The commission — once memorably described as a civil service with attitude — is at the heart of the European Union. It carries out the administration and oversees the rules and regulations, but it also proposes legislation and ideas. Under Jacques Delors in the 1980s, its attitudes shaped the future of the EU.

It is the most unusual cross between civil service bureaucracy and governmental think-tank in the world.

This is what makes it so alien and dangerous in the minds of Eurosceptics. They think it should be more like Whitehall and less like a French *fonctionnaires'* finishing school. If it has a political role it needs to be more accountable.

The commission's grand project has been nothing less than the future of Europe. It organised the drive to the single market and promoted enlargement. Its immediate goal is economic and monetary union, which many — even in its highest echelons, like the President Jacques Santer says — now doubt will happen.

And yet the commission is the size of one of the more obscure Whitehall departments: fewer than 1,000 people plus 5,000 translators to serve the 38 million inhabitants of the EU. By comparison, the Department for Education and Employment has 5,500 staff.

We all know it spends billions; actually about 1.2 per cent of the combined gross domestic product of its member states and less than 2 per cent of the EU's total public expenditure. Only 5 per cent of the commission's outlay goes on administrative costs to fund those apparently lavish lifestyles.

So why all the fuss? Partly because Brussels sounds so foreign, despite being closer to London than Manchester is, and partly because the commission is made up of foreigners.

The government is making a turgid effort to get more British civil servants recruited, but so far with limited success. The British tend to think you should win through fair play, they don't network like the Italians and Spanish do," one British civil servant said. "The Spanish commissioners are busy filling their departments with Spaniards, but we still think that's rather beneath us."

As civil services go, the commission is strangely schizophrenic: concerned with the grand design but

also with the lorry transit permit agreement, secretive yet surprisingly open in releasing information, meritocratic and yet filling senior posts by national quotas.

The bureaucracy has always been variable: all acknowledge some real high-flyers, but also duds imposed by the quotas. There is a strict pecking order and promotion tends to depend on one's boss.

Things are more relaxed now than in Mr Delors' day, when a word out of place could lead to dismissal and the staff were so fearful of the president's benches that they worked all hours.

Some of the old French civil-service-type arrogance remains — knowing what is

best for the people of Europe without making any inconvenient reference to them — but it has taken a severe knock. "The bureaucrats are unhappy about being so disliked and are trying to work out why."

They allow the police in now to investigate fraud and no longer insist on diplomatic immunity. Per Knudsen, the Danish head of the fraud unit, has been allowed to double his staff (to 130) and reckons they are tracking down a quarter of a billion euro embezzled from the EU each year, mainly in fraudulent aid applications.

There is a wind of change. Maybe the commission is suffering from a lack of confidence after the heady days of Mr Delors.

One official said there was a sudden loss of confidence after the Danish referendum on the Maastricht treaty. "You could see the colour drain from Delors' face"

never again have to canvass on windswept doorsteps: "I am a politician, not a civil servant. I think the foundation of the commission was extremely ingenious: it is because it is charged with putting forward proposals and giving a certain dynamism that it is a political institution. I personally would be quite happy to stand for election."

Of course, he does not have to. The 29 commissioners are appointed for five-year terms by their national governments, largely from the ranks of senior politicians. The president can offer them portfolios but has no power to discipline or sack them. The commissioners are in charge of a civil service which is itself not elected and not answerable to the citizens in whose name it proposes laws and regulations.

Sarones Thatcher has famously jeered that Neil Kinnock was unable to get himself elected to anything in Britain but now yields more executive power in Brussels than he ever did before.

Mr Kinnock, the transport commissioner, points out the inconvenient truth at the heart of the Government's convenient Euroscepticism: "It sometimes makes me impatient that the representation of this place is one of a great nosy-parking bureaucracy issuing flats left, right and centre. There is insufficient consciousness that there can be no European law without the assent of the ministers of the European states."

Discounting the former prime minister's sour grapes, it is the accountability gap at the heart of the EU's central institutions which causes distrust and suspicion, not just in Britain but throughout the member states.

The parliament spends but does not tax. Its members are remote and often disengaged from their electorates. The Council of Ministers wheels and deals and horse-trades in deepest secrecy. And the commission and its leaders are not really responsible to anybody.

Britain supports enlargement to offer membership to the states of eastern Europe. With that will inevitably come more majority voting: unanimity will not be practicable if anything is ever to get done. The present Government accepts majority rule at home, so why not in the club it wants to belong to and benefit from? Does accountability just mean saying No?

Concluded.

Jonathan Romney

page 7

What makes Heat as much an event as a movie is that it teams Al Pacino and Robert De Niro, American cinema's two raging bulls turned sacred cows — and that's all the high-concept pitch it needs.

Jonathan Romney

page 7

Breaking the deadlock

Senator Mitchell has produced a valuable report

IMPASSE — what impasse? Last year the differences over weapons decommissioning in Northern Ireland seemed to have become intractable going on irreconcilable. Yesterday, within hours of the publication of the Mitchell report, they seemed to just blow away. By yesterday evening fresh clouds were beginning to gather, but the change of mood and the new spirit of optimism were unmistakable. By proposing a series of tough conditions for all parties entering future political talks, and by floating the possibility of an election to precede those talks, Senator Mitchell and his colleagues have done exactly what was required of them. They have got the deadlocked parties off the decommissioning hook they had been on for so long.

It would be wrong, however, to see the Mitchell report as merely a tactical contrivance. It also casts a genuinely fresh eye on the old problems. It sets out a coherent and pragmatic way of moving to proper talks by emphasising that the participants must sign up to six principled commitments. It lists a series of clear steps by which decommissioning can take place alongside the talks process. It underlines other important truths that any reasonable participant ought to accept, including a recognition of the need for an amnesty and for further action on prisoners, as well as a rebuttal of Sinn Fein's mischievous attempt to treat paramilitary and security force weaponry as equivalent. All this confirms the wisdom of inviting an international perspective to be brought into the Northern Ireland negotiations. Those who created the international body have done well.

The most immediate and grateful beneficiary of this process was undoubtedly the British government. Until yesterday, Britain was tied to the mast by Sir Patrick Mayhew's Washington speech last year, the third condition

of which required a beginning to weapons decommissioning before Sinn Fein and its loyalist equivalents could enter all-party political talks. For months, "Washington Three" had been London's irreducible condition for progress. Yesterday there was very little mention of Washington Three during a long and consensual hour of exchanges in the Commons. John Major seized on the brief 56th paragraph of the Mitchell report to propose that pre-negotiation elections can be a credible alternative route for the paramilitaries to reach the conference table. Conservative backbenchers who as recently as yesterday morning had claimed that Washington Three was non-negotiable suddenly went quiet. When it came to it, the Conservatives clearly preferred progress to preconditions.

But we are not out of the wood yet. The satisfied all-party mood at Westminster is not as hegemonic as it may appear. Even yesterday it was somewhat punctured by the SDLP's allegations that the government has chosen David Trimble's preferred solutions largely in order to secure Unionist support in the Commons. Sinn Fein's initial welcome for Mitchell also grew more guarded after Mr Major's statements. There is a danger that nationalist and republican opinion, suspicious of the implications and consequences of an election which will confirm their minority status in Northern Ireland, will dig in against this approach. Any election will be a credibility contest in the Catholic north between the SDLP and Sinn Fein, with much at stake for both parties. Southern Irish politicians who welcomed the report yesterday may find that the way that it has been accepted in London carries a sting in the tail for their longterm aspirations. The Mitchell report has freed up the peace process, but it may also contain the seeds of future confrontations.

An unhealthy tax on learning

A £300 entry fee for university students should be opposed

FORGET selection at 11, there is a much more serious problem facing secondary school pupils: a possible £300 fee for students starting university this Autumn. And that's if they are lucky enough, with the recent freeze on numbers, to find a place. Faced with the steepest cuts since 1981, university vice chancellors are holding an emergency meeting next week having already held a summit with student leaders and lecturers last week. Savage though the 1981 squeeze was — labelled "illiterate, innumerate, miserable, negative and phillistine" by Robert Rhodes James, the eminent Conservative backbencher — the 1996 cuts are more serious. They follow 15 years of cuts and "efficiency savings". The point at which financial cuts affect the quality of courses has already been reached. A 25 per cent reduction in funding over the past five years, is now to be succeeded by 12 per cent over the next three. No wonder the Tories have invented a new education strategy à la Harman: divert and rule.

University heads are uniting behind a "graduate tax" as the solution to their underlying funding problems. A Guardian survey of 23 of the 104 vice-chancellors published today shows overwhelming support for this Australian approach under which students repay part of their tuition and maintenance costs at university once they begin to earn above a set level. Compared to the current loan system, a graduate tax would be cheaper to administer, less likely to deter, raise more revenue and

be far more equitable. But the scheme would need legislative action. Labour has yet to produce a higher education paper but has been as reluctant as the Tories to support the graduate tax. That the university vice chancellors are uniting behind the scheme is good news. They, too, have been divided shredding one radical plan and still consulting on another. In the last decade Britain has moved from an elite to a mass system of higher education. It is time it was properly funded.

The £300 entry fee for new students is a one-off emergency proposal from the vice chancellors to meet this Autumn's cash crisis. It should be opposed. So should the other option under discussion: boycotting quality control procedures. The fee would shut out students of high promise by deterring people from poor homes — and prompt a non-payment campaign on the campus destroying the present unity. The boycott would be equally counterproductive, easily dismissed by ministers as a self-serving tactic by vice chancellors wanting to cover up their inadequacies. More imagination is needed. And who better to provide it than students, who have far more experience in seeking to mobilise public support. A united march, begowned vice chancellors in their ermine alongside bejeaned students outside Parliament, would be a start. The aims should be twofold: maintain unity and ensure the public knows who is to blame: pusillanimous politicians who have passed the buck.

Mr Bingley starts a price war

Building societies staying mutual may see virtue rewarded

THE EMPIRE strikes back. By cutting mortgage rates by 0.25 per cent to 7.24 per cent — the lowest for 25 years — the Bradford & Bingley will remind people that there is plenty of life left in mutual societies as long as they exploit their historic competitive advantage. Publicly quoted companies are, of course, a Good Thing, but that doesn't mean they should take over the world. British Gas isn't the only role model. There should be competition between types of businesses as well as between corporations. Mutual companies — owned by customers rather than outside shareholders — were spawned from Victorian self-help. Recently they have looked endangered as one after another opted for PLC status enabling them to distribute their reserves as shares. This provoked a scramble to open new accounts to qualify for a pot of gold.

Mutual societies that remain loyal to their noble ideals may have the last

laugh. As long as they control costs they are more competitive than banks because they don't shell out half of their profits as dividends. Instead, like B & B, they can use the cash to reduce interest rates or give bonuses to loyal depositors. According to Bank of England figures the average interest rate charged by building societies on deposits has been about one per cent below that of the banks during the past 10 years. Some might have done even better if they hadn't followed the banks into ill-advised diversifications like estate agency. If mutual societies sit tight there may be a renaissance around the corner. Once the tidal wave of money chasing building societies most likely to convert into PLCs has run its course, that money will be looking for a permanent home. If the traditional building societies continue to undercut the banks then the tidal wave may come back home again. To mutual advantage.



Letters to the Editor

A Nobel cause; needs refining

PROFESSOR Joseph Rotblat (going to war on war, January 23) writes that "all inhabitants of the globe are becoming like one family". From the family's point of view, peace is a common interest and should override all others. However, in our global free-market economy it clearly does not. On the contrary, war is a very profitable business. Rotblat's human family will remain a dream unless we address the root cause.

Marguerite Morgan,
24 Hammett Court,
Weymouth Road,
Monmouth,
Gwent NP23 3JQ.

TO ABOLISH war, Rotblat seeks to "create a new mind-set", which turns out to be the old mind-set in a new guise: delete "loyalty to nation" and insert "loyalty to mankind". But in a world where so many other species are being exploited or exterminated, "my species, right or wrong" is not much better than "my country, right or wrong".

Philip Lloyd Lewis,
57F Mallard Road,
Bournemouth BH8 9PJ.

SHOULD like to suggest the following adaptation to Rotblat's final paragraph: "At a time when the action of a single species may endanger the whole planet, it is imperative to develop a loyalty to a greater whole."

Grace Blinell,
Little Grove,
Grove Lane,
Chesham,
Bucks HP5 3QQ.

Nursery fare

YOU are right to highlight the fact that the nursery vouchers programme will help those who need it least (Tory disquiet over vouchers undermines Shephard's taints, January 23). The biggest beneficiaries are those who are already paying for a nursery education. They will win the education lottery to the tune of £1,100.

But what of the parents who can't afford to "top up" the voucher to buy a private nursery place? Many will get a voucher only to find that they can't cash it in.

The Government's "light touch" inspection regime will make it easy for the private, quick-buck merchants to set up shop in second-rate facilities without worrying about the quality of teaching.

It would have been far better to expand nursery education by building on what local education authorities have already put in place.

Mark Oakes,
Media Relations Manager,
Association of County Councils,
Eaton House,
65a Eaton Square,
London SW1W 9BH.

Power at a shocking price

GREGORY Palast (City pages, January 18) may be correct that secrecy, inadequate staffing and a tolerance for exorbitant rates of profit make British utility regulation feeble compared to that in America. He neglects to mention, however, an important feature of the American public-utility system: the fair value of the assets?

Frederick Guy,
ESRC Centre for
Business Research,
University of Cambridge,
Cambridge CB3 9DE UK

THE exchange of views on regulation between Gregory Palast and Stephen Littlechild made several references to the price of electricity which need elaborating. With over 60 regulatory bodies across the US, national comparisons with the UK are un-sound, whereas a direct price comparison between New York and London customers is more revealing. A typical London household pays 8p for a kilowatt-hour of electricity while the New Yorker pays nearly 17p. No doubt the extra

8p goes towards the fees and salaries of the legions of accountants and lawyers who live off the back of the US regulatory system.

Philip Daubeney,
Electricity Association,
30 Millbank,
London SW1P 4RD.

SO the Regional Electricity Companies are giving a one-off discount of £50 to all domestic electricity customers. Those of you who pay your accounts by quarterly bill will receive this windfall in the form of a cheque; but the rest of us, who obtain our electricity via pre-paid meters, are being sent, by recorded delivery, electricity tokens to the value of £50. This not only implies that we cannot be trusted with cash, but assures that every penny of this largesse, which we supplied in the first place, is returned intact to the RECs — reinforcing the idea that if one is poor, one deserves to be treated shabbily.

Billie Campbell,
14 Ashfield Avenue,
Kings Heath,
Birmingham B14 7AT.

Major and other hypocrites

SO JOHN MAJOR is getting tough on hypocrisy, is he (Simon Hoggart Sketch, January 24)? What will he do about the people in his party who persistently bleat about "the threat to national sovereignty" posed by the EU or a Scottish parliament, but who don't give a damn about other threats?

Foreigners are taking over the Royal Train and the Royal Mail. They are buying into our rail network, our water and electricity supplies, even our National Lottery. They control large chunks of British industry. Don't they pose a threat to national sovereignty? An extra-terrestrial force is gobbling up the coverage of sport on TV. Rumour has it that Murdoch is actually a human being — Australian by birth, American by citizenship. Either way, doesn't his grip on the British media threaten our sovereignty? And what about Conservative Party finances, boosted by donations of tycoons from Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Hong Kong? Will the party's willingness to accept these donations have no effect on national sovereignty? Major's trouble is that he spots hypocrisy only when it is displayed on the Opposition benches; he is oblivious to displays on his own side. Can you get more hypocritical than that?

Eric Alexander,
8a Chestnut Avenue,
High Wycombe,
Bucks HP11 1DJ.

CONGRATULATE Nigel Gann (Letters, January 24) on the diligence of his research. These were the facts of the matter: when our fourth child was allocated to Illington Green School, we sought a place for him at Woodberry Down, another comprehensive, where his brother, sister and foster brother were already pupils.

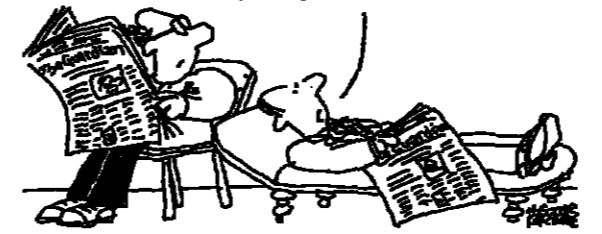
(Prof) David Donnison,
23 Bank Street,
Glasgow G12 8JQ.

WRONG again. My son's school, Liverpool Blue Coat, is not a grant-maintained school (Six of the best who embarrassed Labour, January 22). Quite the reverse. When there was an attempt to take the school into the GM sector I was prominently involved in the campaign which kept the school as a local authority comprehensive.

Peter Kilfoyle MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

More Harriet Harman letters on Page 10

I SAID: 'I DON'T JUST HATE MYSELF - I HATE YOU, TOO'



Confused, bottom of the class

POS COWARD (A stake in exploitation and poverty, January 23) writes of the working class as having "been written out of the script" partly because no one knows what it is any more.

Indeed, this correspondent — one-time potato-picker, builder's labourer, bank clerk, shop-floor-progress chaser, clerk, soldier, student, teacher and socialist — has never entertained any doubts. But then, up to my retirement I had always found myself obliged to sell what skills I possessed in exchange for a wage or a salary. Also, I am, and have always considered myself to be, a member of the working class.

As for the so-called middle class: even supposing such a creature exists within advanced capitalism, who, on reflection, would seriously wish to be so categorised? Have we no pride that we should deny our true economic class status in order to pursue such demeaning one-upmanship?

Richard Cooper,
1 Caxton Road,
Thrusfield, Skipton,
North Yorkshire BD23 5EZ.

CAN someone explain to me why Guardian writers (self-evidently middle-class) assume that Guardian readers (overwhelmingly middle-class) enjoy their habit of calling everything they most despise "middle-class"?

It's difficult to know what the alternative to being middle-class is if you are a Guardian reader. If more of us were working class, presumably the Guardian's advertising director would complain. Should we all be upper-class? Would we not then switch to another paper?

Guardian writers seem to reserve their worst scorn for those aspiring to become middle-class. I'm not a psychoanalyst, but does this not indicate a worrying level of self-contempt? "You want to be like me?" It would seem perverse to "aspire" to be working-class — or again, perhaps not?

Surely we don't want John Major's "classless society"? Or do we? Yours (from the bottom of the class),

Robert Dudley,
8 Abbotstone Road,
London SW15 1QR.

Be prepared

YOUR leader (January 24) makes flattering reference to my Llandudno speech 15 years ago, and seeks to contrast Mr Ashdown's speech as: "Do not prepare for government, but for a share in government." There is in fact no such contrast. My sentence, "Go back to your constituencies and prepare for government," has been so often wrenched out of context as to suggest that I envisaged an overall Liberal majority.

Of course, I did nothing of the kind. This was simply a rhetorical flourish at the end of a speech arguing that we should be *part* of the next government. It would scarcely have sounded an effective rallying call to say: "Go back to your constituencies and prepare for a share in government." but no one present could doubt that that was what was meant.

Paddy Ashdown's elaboration on the same theme is all the more cogent, as you pointed out, after 16 1/2 years of Tory government. It is not as you described, "a scaled-down vision" of the next government.

House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

Please include a full postal address, even on e-mailed letters, and a telephone number.

A Country Diary

TARBETNESS: The drive up the east coast was memorable for the amount of wildlife seen, beginning with the so-called haul out of common seals in the Cromarty Firth. The expression implies that the seals drag themselves up on to mud and sand banks and, while they are capable of doing this, the end result is more simple. They simply sit on a bank at the shallowest part as the tide is ebbing and by the time the tide is at its lowest the seals can be many yards away from water. Birds of prey on the trip included a pair of red kites looking very interested in a cove, a sparrow hawk chasing small birds and a buzzard being mobbed by two hooded crows. Near the delightfully named Arabelle a herd of whooper swans were grazing but they were very nervous, as if they had been moved on by people more interested in their farm crops. There were 60 adults and only seven juveniles so it looked as though last year's breeding season in Iceland had not gone well. AT

Rockfield there were five male and one female goldeneye and a single guillemot reminded me that dead auks, including little auks, have been washed up along this coast in the previous week or so. Tarbetness produced its usual flock of eiders plus a single male long-tailed and a slim looking red-throated diver in winter plumage. The nearby village of Portmahomack had, recently, two icehouses but the one I had often photographed in the past had unfortunately been destroyed for reasons of safety. I had never seen the other — listed — icehouse but enquiries at the post office soon revealed the structure although, as the villager said: "It is not much to photograph." It was told that there was a hole in the top where they used to drop in the ice but I took their word for this interesting fact. I wonder why such a small village would have two icehouses only about two hundred yards from each other?

RAY COLLIER

What's wrong with the railways (continued)

BOOKED a ticket by telephone on December 22 to travel between London and Preston on January 18 (Rail companies' charging too much for tickets, January 3). At the time, my £40 train was deemed to be in the later cheap-rate period and I was told that my credit card would be debited with £38. Now I find that BR wants £36, having moved the cut-off time back to 8.30.

Andrew Radford,
3 Kettlewell Close,
Cambridge CB1 9QW.

ASKED for a train to get me from Ely to Manchester by 11am. I was told by the National Rail Enquiry Service to go via Leeds with changes at Peterborough and Leeds. Only when I asked

what had happened to the direct train, was I told that, yes, I could go direct. The reason for the initial junk information? "The computer gives the train nearest to your chosen arrival time."

Richard Freeman,
55 Milton Road,
Cambridge CB4 1XA.

WISHED to travel by rail from Feltham to Leamington Spa via London and was told the only fare available was £51. At Marylebone, I spotted posters offering London to Leamington Spa, any day, any train, £17 for a day return. On querying this, I was told to ask for a refund when I returned to Feltham. After much searching in fare tables, the £17 fare was located and I was given a form

to obtain a refund. The staff were very helpful and were keen to ensure I paid the best fare. The problem seems to rest with the electronic ticket machines. Who will oversee this after privatisation?

Peter Meehan,
81 Hanover Avenue,
Feltham, Middx TW18 4JR.

READ with some amusement of British Rail attempting to fine passengers for failing to complete their journey. As I travelled from Liverpool to London on a return ticket costing £32 (single £40), a question sprang to mind: would I be fined for sneakily discarding the return?

Martin Senior,
Rising Sun Cottage,
Clattenbridge,
Wiltshire BA1 4JD.

سكنا من الامم

Diary Matthew Norman

THE career of my old friend Mad Frankie Fraser blossoms. When last we met him, in December, he was about to star in the Channel 4 Christmas show in Leeds...

NOW some lessons in the categorical denial. Gerald Flinck, Gillingham council's press officer, has written to deny rumours that Gillingham Council uses closed-circuit television cameras in public conveniences...

THE vigil for my unrepentant friend Dr Julian Lewis, the fearless searcher of the airwaves for anti-Tory bias, reaches day seven, and my fears grow by the hour...

N EATLY twisting the old newspaper saw about what makes news, a dog has shot a man in Kentucky. While Philip Smith of Martin County was hunting, his spaniel Rusty stepped on the trigger of a shotgun...

FROM Bergen in Norway comes news that Dr Ingvald Wilhelmson is having remarkable success treating hypochondriacs. Rather than show them disdain in the orthodox, text-book manner, Dr Wilhelmson is all sympathy and reassurance...

THE brochure for the forthcoming series of lectures at the ICA in London has arrived. Charles Rutherford's 'Imagining Atlantis' sounds intriguing, and so does Stuart Morgan's 'Oblivion or Bolivian? what is wrong with Bolivian art?'



Spare us the sanctimony on the road to Bromley

Commentary Hugo Young

HARRIET Harman is perhaps fortunate that her son, Joe, is only one year younger. If he was 11 next year not this, she might be making her family decision about his schooling in a context that exposed her ambiguities more starkly...

in a government elected by a large majority to change the world. This, to put it no higher, would alter the politics of her situation. And it's the scenario to be considered. Now, she can just about shelter behind the years of Tory failure...

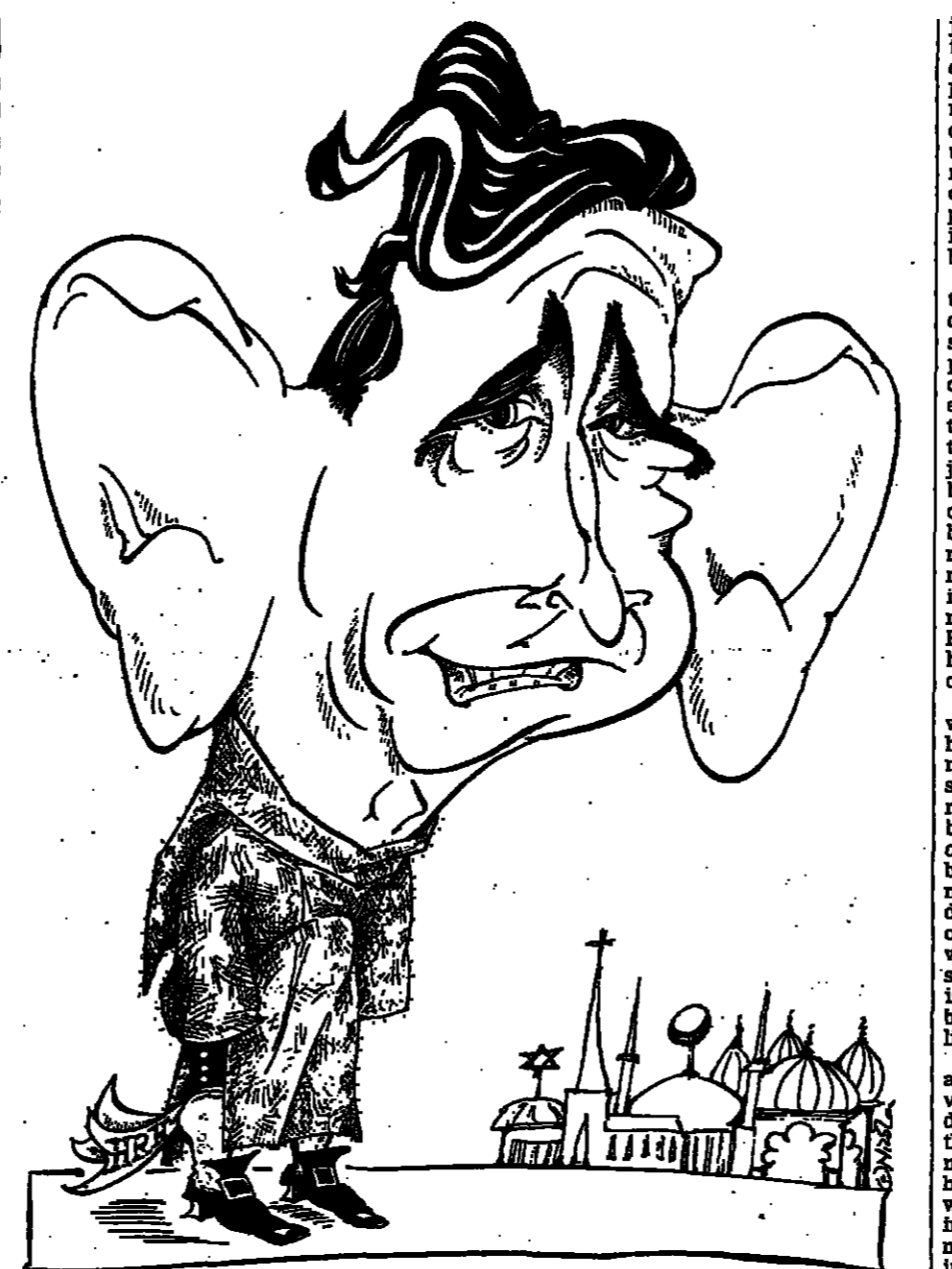
Some inconsistencies between public and private are acceptable, or at least survivable. Nobody's perfect. A one-off misfortune with the breathalysers doesn't mean a politician should be disqualified from voting to toughen the drink-driving law...

would be no talk-out other than the base assertion that until the education system was perfectly and completely reformed, prating about a belief in reform imposed no obligations. That might be good enough for the private citizen...

The millennium offers a prospect of national renewal but, argues The Prince of Wales, plans to mark the event are depressingly materialistic. Where are the beacons of hope, the sense of the spirit, the celebration of community?

Make it a matter of the spirit

THE YEAR 2000 will be here before we know it. In the Western world, at least, mankind approaches this watershed with varied emotions. For the dawn of a new millennium is more than a simple change of chronology, or an altered digit on the date line...



The importance of this opportunity becomes clear once we appreciate what the millennium means. Surprisingly, there has been little obvious attempt to look beneath the surface of this event as it applies to us in the waning years of the 20th century...

From each breath we take renewing the oxygen in our blood to the daily cycle, the waxing and the waning of the moon, the repetition of the seasons and the renewal of the world each spring, we live our lives with the idea of periodic new beginnings...

A thousand ages in thy sight Are like an evening gone. Short as the watch that ends the night Before the rising sun. This concept of renewal is not the monopoly of Christianity, but is central to many of the great faiths...

It seems to me a serious omission that so far, despite all the work and discussion undertaken by the Anglican Church, and despite pro-

nouncements on the subject by the Pope, the rather limited public discussion in Britain about the millennium has not focused on its spiritual importance and the potential it holds for personal and national renewal.

Plans are well advanced to mark the event, and the celebrations will begin in less than four years' time. But the deeper, more fundamental, aspects of the millennium are barely being considered.

I T IS, to say the least, depressing that there is so little one can describe as transcending the merely material in the projects which have so far been submitted to the Millennium Commission.

throughout the nation as a whole. But it cannot do so until we recognise the need to renew the way in which we educate people, so that we do not educate out those intuitive powers of the heart which lie at the root of all spiritual experience.

The 20th century has been an age of enormous destruction and dislocation, of dysfunction and disharmony. The millennium is a moment to put that behind us and to start again by building on the many strengths we already possess...

We must start by appreciating the unique heritage of our own country. A society which sets its face against its past and only values what is new and exciting will never be a society which is at peace with itself or which understands itself.

Our cathedrals and churches are beacons of hope and spiritual renewal in the hearts of both our cities and our towns. The imaginative use of millennium funds, through projects to restore some of the building blocks of civilised life...

All too often, they sit cheek-by-jowl with inner-city deprivation and office wastelands. They could become true centres of renewal stretching far beyond the immediate close. There are already wonderful examples of what can be done in some of our abandoned churches...

The millennium provides us with a unique opportunity to spend money for the future good of Britain. It provides a new opportunity for people to work together with a common purpose. It provides the opportunity to execute works of art and to build significant public buildings which will be a genuine reflection of the deeper values of our humanity.

jects which are not linked to these wider issues of real benefit. For there is so much to put right. There is an urgent need to learn how we can discover new and imaginative uses for fine old buildings, rather than knock them down and to understand and preserve the best of our inheritance, rather than destroy it by ignorance or neglect.

At a time when there are well over 800,000 empty homes in Britain, most - but not all - in private hands, we should look harder at ways to re-use our existing housing stock before we rush into building on greenfield sites.

I hope that help and encouragement will be given to individuals and organisations dedicated to working for those who fall outside the mainstream of society. For help to the disadvantaged, whether in education, housing, or the provision of community facilities, will be an important means of repairing some of the ravages of our 20th-century social history.

ALL too often, they sit cheek-by-jowl with inner-city deprivation and office wastelands. They could become true centres of renewal stretching far beyond the immediate close. There are already wonderful examples of what can be done in some of our abandoned churches...

See money going to help restore specially worthwhile buildings - not just because they are 'old buildings', but because they are invaluable imbued with those deeper values which strike a particular chord in our hearts.

can benefit. The forces it represents bind us all together. As far as Britain is concerned everyone, whatever their culture or beliefs and whether the spiritual basis to their lives matters to them or not, can have a stake in the process which the millennium represents. I would hope, for example, that a start might be made to help those faiths, which have been eradicated, but which still have a place in the world; to erect buildings of real quality. This is, surely, one of those instances where millennium money may be able to build bridges across some of these divisions in Britain's society.

But we also need to be teaching in a more sensitive and imaginative way the architects, planners and designers of tomorrow - to say nothing of the property developers, road engineers and volume housebuilders - so that we can foster a less dogmatic approach to creating and designing buildings. All this is an enormous challenge, and it is one of overwhelming importance, but there is nothing in this process excluding Christianity or to Western society. While the year 2000 has no significance in itself for Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and the people of other major religions, the urge for spiritual and material renewal applies as much to the non-Christian as to the Christian.

This article also appears in the February/March edition of Perspectives On Architecture

Prospect

ESSAYS. ARGUMENT. REVIEW The new monthly magazine February issue on sale now John McVicar on morphine: are the dying suffering because doctors won't prescribe? Paul Hirst debunking globalisation: the evidence contradicts the orthodox John Maddox on cosmology: why Big Bang theory is compromised by 16 billion year old stars Graham Allison on nuclear terrorism: the world's most urgent problem: leakage of nuclear material from the former USSR Allan Massie on British writers: 1950s writers represented something real in British life, 1960s writers are brilliant but disconnected PLUS Jonathan Miller interviewed on New Labour, French philosophers and TV, Ian Gilmour on the failure of the Tory left, David Hannay on the UN's mission impossible, Kit McMahon on the end of inflation, Lesley Chamberlain on the Russian novel, Regis Debray remembers his friend Mitterrand, Deyan Sudjic on Las Vegas, Jeremy Clarke on Glasgow, Michael Pye on New York Available at WH Smith, John Menzies and all good newsagents

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OUR POSTBAG has overflowed with your views on Harriet Harman's dilemma. Hundreds of letters have been arriving, by post, fax and e-mail — making this the biggest issue on readers' minds for months. What has emerged so far is that you cannot agree on whether she was right in her

decision: a small majority voiced firm support for a parent putting her child's interests first but many came out firmly against what some called "hypocrisy" and a "betrayal" of party policy. Should Harriet Harman resign? There is a wide range of opinion here — though a fair

number of letter writers say her decision makes her a liability for her party. Clearer, however, is your broad view that the education system should not make parents face such choices far better, you say, that attention is paid to improving the schools themselves.

Should she stay or should she go?

LIVE a few hundred yards from Harriet Harman and must point out that her choice of schools is wider than indicated in your newspaper. All my children have attended a good comprehensive in Plumlich which is much nearer than St Olive's and easy to get to by public transport. For what it's worth, 54 per cent of students achieved grades A-C against the national figure of 52.7 per cent. Jack Straw sends his son to the school and I am sure would recommend it. It is convenient to Westminster and Transport House for parents' evenings.

Some inner London schools do achieve a lot and need the support of parents such as Harriet Harman: if they are to continue doing so. Perhaps I have misunderstood and she is personally content with selection. In which case should she not say so and resign as a shadow minister? David Wilson, 54 Hollingbourne Road, London SE24 9ND.

WE WANT to come clean as irresponsible parents — we are victimising our children. We don't use private hospitals, dentists or schools, because they are socially divisive: we think they are positively harmful to citizens, so we imagined they'd be harmful to our kids. We thought we were doing our best for them. Seems not. Now it's official: the Labour Party has decided that to send your child to a non-selective state school is to victimise that child. Are there, we must ask, enough social workers left to cope with the terrible things so many of us are imposing on our children? Buzz and Polly Rodwell, 10 Berners Street, Ipswich IP1 3LU.

HARRIET HARMAN and Jack Dromey add insult to injury. Not content with putting personal and family preference before national interests, and further damaging Labour's already shaky record on equality of opportunity in education, they now play the "mum's" card.

What sort of nonsense is this? Entry into political life means being seen to act honourably in putting public need before private preference. To appeal to the interests of middle-class motherhood is utterly base; it suggests that mothers have a monopoly of morality and panders to archaic and damaging essentialist notions of the feminine. And not only does it deeply offend those of us who sent our children to comprehensive schools in the knowledge that in so doing those schools would improve, but does everyone a disservice in endorsing a "buy your way out" mentality. Harriet Harman should have the courage of her convictions and resign. Prof Marcia Pointon, 21 Clifton Hill, Brighton BN1 3HQ.

THE DEBATE surrounding grammar schools should be clear cut: either selection is morally and socially indefensible or it is not. There is no room for hypocrisy. If Harriet Harman believed selection to be wrong she would not have chosen St Olive's for her son. Failure by Tony Blair and the Shadow Cabinet to condemn Harman's action is a betrayal of the vision and hope which has sustained many Labour supporters through the past 16 years. If New Labour persists in replacing commitment by expediency and if they do not rethink carefully what they do and say concerning education then we will see the birth of a new class of voiceless people: committed socialists who will not support a Labour government. Jane Ewen, 54 Sunrise Avenue, Chelmsford CM1 4JP.

NO AMOUNT of rationalisation will rescue Harriet Harman from the charge of hypocrisy. If she thinks that state schools are not good enough for her children, then they are not good enough for anyone's children. If bad state schools are to improve, they will only do so if influential people send their own children to them. Expedient double-speak is what we have come to expect from the Tory Party in both health and education — it's good enough for you and yours but not for me and mine. If Harriet Harman thinks otherwise, she should resign

not just her shadow post but from the so-called New Labour. John Amos, 1 Kingsland Cottages, Sayers Common, W Sussex BN6 9JG. THERE must be many like me who are profoundly grateful to Harriet Harman; she has made our minds up for us at last. Since she won't resign (and Blair can hardly sack her for following his example, can he?), I know now where they, and I, stand. They stand canting; I stand gone. I shall not vote Labour again. Nous sommes avec toi, Arthur! Steve Illingworth, 13 Gillstone Drive, Haworth, W Yorks. WHAT used to separate the Labour Party from the Conservative Party was that in the Labour movement we did our best for all children. Of course Harriet Harman won't resign. If she were a person to resign on principle she would never have chosen the selfish option in the first place. But she is a potential cabinet minister and a member of the ruling class and, of course, because of this, she believes that there should be one form of education for the children of well-informed and prudent parents, important people like her, and another for the children of the feckless and ignorant. Have the principled socialists in the Labour Party all been castrated? Are you going to tolerate yet another betrayal? She won't resign so you must get rid of her. J G Ollason, Eilon, Aberdeenshire AB41 6RA. MS HARMAN'S argument that in sending her son to a selective school she is merely "making a choice in the context of the system as it is" is disingenuous. It is St Olive's which chooses to be selective: it is not the system which forces it to be so. In making that choice, the school itself endorses the principle which Ms Harman purports to oppose, in choosing to send her child there, she herself endorses the school's policy and the principle. If what is best does not accord with one's political beliefs, why hold those beliefs? Michael Lobban, 8 Mayorswell Street, Durham.



The new intake... a pregnant Harriet Harman arrives at Westminster in 1982. Now one of her children is at the centre of a political storm. Top: children in a North-east comprehensive ponder their future. FRANK MARTINDALE/MPHOTOS

Social justice and personal sacrifice

THOSE who are critical of Harriet Harman for sending her son to St Olive's rather than a local comprehensive school are ignoring a fundamental principle of moral decision making. Every individual has an intrinsic value and ought never to be exploited as a means to an end. This is surely one of the underlying ethical foundations of the Labour Party in its pursuit of equality and social justice irrespective of creed, race or status. Sixteen years of Tory government have opposed these foundations by creating an unequal and unjust society in which people are only valued for wealth, status and enterprise.

All moral decisions have to be taken within the real world and Harriet Harman chose what she believes to be less than the best for her own son, either to retain her status within the Shadow Cabinet or to uphold a general principle, this would have been an immoral decision and one that betrays the Labour movement. DW Cooling, All Saints Rectory, Church Hill, Purlidge CM3 6QH.

I CAN think of no better way of highlighting the continuing problems of the state schooling system in this country than for a senior Shadow Cabinet member of a party committed to non-selective education to have to make such a difficult personal decision. I can also think of no better demonstration of personal hypocrisy than for parents to sacrifice the educational opportunities of their child simply because it is politically expedient to do so. If MPs feel they must send their children to the most politically convenient schools, for fear of retribution from the opposition, what hope is there for an intelligent debate on the subject? Mathias Disney, 42 Chesham Road, London SW4 6NP.

AS A CHILD I attended St Olive's and St Saviour's Grammar School. Later I taught at Kingsdale Comprehensive School, and I am now a parent choosing a secondary school for my eldest son. Ms Harman hopes soon to be in the position to assist Kingsdale to be as well appointed as St Olive's but Kingsdale is working under Conservative education policies which have favoured the rich of affluent Kent to the detriment of the poor of Brixton and Southwark. Although I am an implacable opponent of selective entry to schools, given a choice for my son between Kingsdale and St Olive's I am afraid there is no doubt which I would choose.

When Harriet Harman is in the Cabinet I expect to see her working strenuously to remove the divide which makes schools like St Olive's so much more attractive than almost any inner-city secondary school. Until then I respect her right to do the best she can for her children. Teewyn Cockett, 62 High Road, Wortwell IP20 0EN.

THE LADY has not asked questions for cash, concealed financial interests, made a fortune out of privatised companies, misled the House, sold arms to Iraq, broken Barings Bank, misbehaved in the Bank of England, spoken ill of Miss Legge-Bourke or joined Arthur Scargill's new party. Like every parent she has made sacrifices for her children. This one is so great that it compromised her principles and caused her great em-

barment before friend and foe alike. Miss Harman may emerge as a less astute politician but she is a better human being. H D Edmunds, 10A Risca Road, Newport NP9 4JW. WHEN it comes to hypocrisy over education, what about a party whose members administer the state education system but largely send their own children to privately-financed schools, whose members run the NHS but largely use private medical care and who apparently make minimal use of state-funded forms of transport? Maurice Cornish, 10 Blackhill Drive, Helensburgh G84 9RE.

UNTIL recently I lived yards from Harriet Harman's home and my son attended the same junior school as her son. I would have faced the same dilemma had my husband's job not moved us away. There are no truly comprehensive schools in that part of Southwark. The presence of three major public schools within half a mile means that local state schools neither attract the full range of academic ability or achieve anything like a social mix — they are "comprehensive" only in name. Sixteen years of Tory rule and stagnation of the state education system mean they are run down and teacher morale is rock-bottom. Like Ms Harman, I could not have sacrificed my son's future to my principles when the "choices" are illusory. Rachel M Swoffield, 12 The Meads, Berkhamsted HP4 9QX.

MY DAUGHTER passed the 11-plus 21 years ago. We had the choice of two local schools, one a girl's grammar, the other a mixed comprehensive. According to my principles, I opted for the comprehensive. My daughter blames me still for denying her the chance of the best education possible. I still believe in the principles but I also believe the basis of those principles must be there and working before one sacrifices the future of one's child. Eva M Knutson, 16 Highfield Road, Northwood HA6 1ET.

WHY all the fuss over Harriet Harman sending her son to a selective school? Do opponents of rail privatisation refuse to travel by train until the railways are re-nationalised? Do opponents of electricity privatisation use candles? Even those who want to change the system must use that system until it is changed. Justin Nelson, Meridian House, St David's Bridge, Cranbrook TN17 3HL.

A change for the bitter HARRIET HARMAN should consider crossing the House and becoming a Tory. That way she'd never have any moral principles to defend. Maureen Plantagenet, 22 rue des Moutiers, 31450 Montiscard, France.

SENIOR Blairites are apparently unconcerned about the Harman furore because they feel it reinforces the impression that Labour has changed. In the same vein, perhaps one can conclude that the activities of Tory MPs give a more rounded perspective of human frailty and that this can only benefit a party that puts itself in a "Back to Basics" straitjacket. David Sibson, 1519 Luxembourg.

The marks of inequality in a vicious circle of results

THE DECISION by Ms Harman highlights an issue you overlooked in your Leader (Harriet's Right to Choose, January 22). You quote the comparative poor examination results of schools in her locality. Why not quote the percentage of parents patronising these schools who are architects, accountants in the City, managing directors of merchant banks or others with well above average incomes and success in formal education? Or alternatively the percentages who are unemployed, in low paid and temporary jobs? The publication of examination league tables has demonstrated one more that academic results are closely correlated with the income and occupation of the parents of pupils. The quality of teaching does make a difference but nothing like the dif-

ference it is possible to achieve in academic results between those schools working in affluent areas compared to those in areas of social deprivation. One doesn't have to be a sociologist to recognise the wide disparities of wealth and income between communities today: disparities made all the wider by policies pursued by recent governments. When people like Ms Harman, with all the advantages of high income, cultural capital and influence, send their children outside their local community for schooling this only serves to distort still further the social composition of the schools, depriving inner-city schools of the support of that small number of middle-class parents in their area whilst adding even more of such parents to the schools already achieving good ex-

amination results. Then the Guardian points to inner-city school exam results as some kind of justification for the affluent to avoid local schools. The long-term question is how do we break the vicious circle of school results linked so closely to parental income and the affluence of the area in which a school is located? It may well be that the only hope in the long run is to begin outside the schools by narrowing the wide disparities in income and wealth which have intensified since the 1980s so that so many of the other inequalities which flow from this fact in terms of housing, employment, access to good education and a good quality of life, are significantly reduced. Is there any political will to suggest a policy which might work towards such an end or is organised selfishness now

so firmly entrenched in our psyche that suggesting any other alternative is deemed to be a vote loser? (Dr) Clive Griggs, Gaudick Road, Eastbourne BN20 7SP. PETER HAIN'S letter (January 23) carries in its tail a sweeping claim: the only option for Labour parents is to support their local comprehensive. Doesn't this confuse the means (comprehensives) and the end (high-quality) classless education for all children? Surely there is scope for some imagination in working out a range of options to provide good education without restriction of access on grounds of ability, income or class? A group of parents in Camberwell started such an experiment five years ago. We wanted a school that would

carry forward the child-centred approach now degraded by Conservative ideologies. We also wanted a closer role in our children's education than any large school could provide. And we wanted to work out a co-operative, collective, community-based way of meeting our children's educational needs. We have therefore run a parent-taught, parent-managed, parent-resourced "school", first in the home of one parent and then (when we became too large and had to register formally) in a building we rent for the purpose. We share the costs and — most importantly — the time needed in teaching, preparing materials, cleaning, doing the accounts. With small classes (the largest has six) and a wide range of interests among parents, we have been able to follow the children's interests

and still deliver the core curriculum to a high standard. The result is a school that excludes nobody and has helped to build a sense of community and mutual support. Children with special needs and very high achievers work happily together. Very few parents are "middle class" but all share responsibility and offer creativity. Is this not worth experimenting with, as a way of achieving the goals we hold dear as Labour members? We cannot let our rejection of the divisive ways of the (selective or private-sector) past and our desire for a fairer, more supportive and more effective education system in the future be fossilised in an exclusive support for just one way of tackling the issue. Barbara Wall, 47 Grove Lane, London SE5 6SP.

صكيات الامم

Lady Fitt

Through thick and thin

LADY (ANN) FITT, who has died aged 74, was the wife of Lord (Gerry) Fitt, the former MP for West Belfast and first leader of Northern Ireland's mainly Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party.

community. Gerry Fitt was a democrat committed to resolving Northern Ireland's problems by peaceful means. His unremitting criticism of republican violence led to attacks from both sides of the sectarian divide and Ann supported him at every point.

couple settled in London away from the strife of Northern Ireland. Ann herself came from Castlederg, a small village on the Tyrone-Donegal border. She met her future husband, who was then a merchant seaman, in London in 1946 while he was between voyages.



Fortress Fitt... Ann and Gerry outside their firebombed house in 1982

Lies Askonas

Performance artiste

LIES Askonas, who has died aged 92 and was for over 30 years a leading London musician's agent, came from a cultured Jewish Viennese background. Alan Mahler, Elisabeth Schumann and Otto Klemperer were frequent visitors at her parents' home, along with the playwrights Arthur Schnitzler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

pect of something thoroughly worthwhile. But if you could convince her of the strength of a scheme, and of how a performer could make or break it, there was no better advocate of what you had in mind. I have watched her turn an artist from scepticism to enthusiasm in a matter of minutes.

Sir Harold Bailey

Linguist of the Orient

SIR HAROLD BAILEY who has died aged 96, was an internationally renowned philologist and a man of immense learning with an extraordinary love of language particularly in its written form.

tempted to elucidate its vocabulary and used the insights gained to illuminate other Iranian and Indian languages. He was able to put unrelated, non-Indo-European languages — such as Chinese, Tibetan and Turkish — to the service of Khotanese, and acquainted himself with many Caucasian languages in search of Iranian loan-words.

been deciphered. His expertise in deciphering difficult scripts, such as that used for writing Pahlavi, bore abundant fruit. He had always been fascinated by writing systems and he practised the alphabets with which he was not currently working so that he would not have to relearn them when they were required.

Dictionary of Khotan Saka. In 1944 Bailey was elected fellow of the British Academy. Many other honours followed, including a cherished knighthood in 1980 for "services to Oriental studies".

Appreciation: Norman MacCaig

Low falutin'

NORMAN MacCAIG (obituary, January 24) was a poet with no epic pretensions. His views on aesthetics and life in general were committedly "low falutin'".

joyed his company, fugging the air with the smoke of many cigarettes and emptying not a few bottles of whisky. He had a knack of somehow always being there when you wanted or needed him.

Jackdaw

WHEN SAUL BELLOW, that great chronicler and critic of American urban life, describes New York as "stirring, insupportable, agitated, unmanageable, demonic" few fellow city-dwellers would be surprised by these tangled adjectives being applied to their own environment.

the strains of social disorganisation are one point of origin for human epidemics, is compelling and is bolstered by individual examples of emerging infectious agents.

national system of trade and communication — and disease. They have no limits; air travel and other routes of transportation have rendered their influence and vulnerability boundless.

Worldwide, about 40 million people died in six months... The growth and decay of our urban centres provide the ideal medium to support the endemic spread of infectious agents, especially among low-income dwellers.

what sex is, we have no dress sense, we all wear those spectacles. Well, it's not all about sticking lots of numbers in a little book, you know. There's many other aspects to rail-spotting, building models and making videos.

Face at Bristol Temple Meads station. The style mas' interest in locomotives is, apparently, prompted by the imminent release of Transpotting, the Danny Boyle film of the Irvine Welsh book.

little world. Multimedia underestimates the power of the individual teacher. Almost everyone who has been switched on to the world of ideas and imagination has invariably been introduced to the life of the mind by a great, imaginative teacher who needn't necessarily be very learned, but whose enthusiasm and determination to engage his or her pupils produces converts...

Jackdaw wants your jewels. E-mail: jackdaw@wardian.co.uk; fax 0171-715 4006; Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Fleet Street, London EC1R 3ER.

Necropolis

On track

Well, I'm wearing an anorak

I know

Long May Jasper Carrott

The Face... trainspotting

Dan Glaister

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

Finance Guardian

Watchdogs get more bite

Simon Bowles and
Larry Elliott

THE Government is planning to boost the resources of the utility watchdogs as the opening shot in a pre-election campaign to repair the battered image of privatisation.

Government in the final stages of preparing the two big pre-election privatisations. Railtrack and the nuclear power company, British Energy.

With public support for these sell-offs at a low ebb, ministers appear anxious to bang the drum for flagship privatisations such as British Telecom, British Gas and the electricity industry where they say customers reap real benefits from lower prices and better service.

Faced with Labour taunts that the regulatory framework is too lenient, the Government realises it needs to shore up the system to convince voters of the benefits of privatisation.

Watchdogs could be given funds to hire special advisers to ensure that they are equipped to scrutinise the utilities more effectively. The need for more resources has become more acute since last year's wave of takeovers in

the electricity and water industries and the emergence of super-utilities spanning two or more sectors.

Another proposal being considered is the creation of an all-party parliamentary select committee to oversee utility regulation.

Ministers see some case for amalgamating regulators — particularly the gas and electricity watchdogs, Ofgas and Ofwat — provided that the utilities are forced to keep the separate parts of their business transparent.

They have ruled out bringing the watchdogs under one roof for fear that the utilities would find it easier to blur their financial performance and escape tough scrutiny.

British Gas grooms Cedric's successor

BRITISH GAS acted yesterday to strengthen its board by appointing a new finance director, leading to fresh speculation that the company was grooming a successor to chief executive Cedric Brown, Chris Barrie writes.

Philip Hampton, finance director of British Steel, will join the group on a salary of £295,000. He will also get £70,000 compensation for loss of share options at BS.

CBI to reverse pay strategy in 'real' rises call

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

GOVERNMENT hopes of a pre-election return to the "feelgood" factor will be given a huge boost today when the CBI calls for workers to be given higher wages and a bigger share of national income.

that has bedevilled Britain for the past 25 years has now been decisively broken.

Nottingham dons to deny Chancellor honorary third degree

Richard Thomas

KENNETH Clarke was never, to Margaret Thatcher's mind, "one of us" and during her reign the two shared the most combative personalities.



Gown in town... The Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, collecting his honorary degree from the Guildhall University, London. PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

In a surprise departure from the previous line adopted by the employers' organisation, CBI director-general Adair Turner will warn that the UK risks becoming a low-wage economy unless it reverses the income trends of recent years.

Mr Turner will argue that it is no longer sustainable for employees to receive an ever-smaller slice of the national cake and that there is no risk that higher wages will lead to an explosion in inflation.

Eleven years after Oxford dons to block Mrs Thatcher's candidacy for an honorary doctorate, staff at Nottingham Trent University — a stone's throw from Mr Clarke's Rushcliffe constituency — are rebelling against a proposal to make him a Doctor of Law.

Staff are particularly incensed at the citation accompanying the award — which has been suggested by the university's vice-chancellor, Professor Ray Cowell — commending the Chancellor for "services to education".

One member of the university's academic board said that, given government cuts in higher education spending and the enormous pressure on teaching staff, the suggestion to honour the former education secretary in this way was "extraordinary and outrageous".

An further salt was rubbed into Mr Clarke's wounds when the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George — who has been opposing the Chancellor's monetary policy for most of the last year — received, with no fuss, an honorary degree from London Guildhall University.

Short Brothers says 1,500 jobs may have to go

Belfast company takes insurance against Fokker crisis, writes Mark Milner

BELFAST-BASED Short Brothers yesterday issued a formal warning that up to 1,500 jobs may have to go in the fall-out from the crisis at the Dutch aircraft manufacturer, Fokker, one of its biggest customers.

Fokker, effectively cutting off its cash life-line, followed the collapse of talks between Daimler-Benz and the Dutch government, which also holds a Fokker stake, on a possible rescue package.

JobCentre pay system 'crackers'

Martyn Halsall and Seamus Milne

THE pay system in the Employment Service, currently facing the prospect of an escalation of industrial action by low-paid JobCentre staff, is "crackers", according to a confidential internal report, which has been passed to the Guardian.

At issue are job cuts, casualisation attacks by claimants and the extra workload created by the introduction of the new Jobseekers' Allowance — as well as the arbitrary implementation of a below-inflation wage settlement. Last night, the CPSA leader,

Ms le Sage warned that the ES pay system was too complicated, "individualised" and "hybrid" for "individuals, their line managers or pay sections to understand".

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Notebook

Battening down unruly markets



Edited by Alex Brummer

THE extraordinary rise in the shares of Standard Chartered bank, which shot up to a new all-time high in after-hours trading last night, has provoked enormous speculation.

drought measures and a general feeling that the customer has been the loser.

Indications that ministers are giving serious thought to strengthening the regulatory system is encouraging, even if it is no more than a sensible piece of politics. It is at least a recognition of public uneasiness.

Certainly Standard Chartered, with its strong presence in emerging markets in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, would provide an Asian leg for any international bank looking for a more global reach.

But it is by no means enough. At the beginning of Margaret Thatcher's radical experiment with privatisation, consumers were promised that they would be given new power and a voice.

However, credible speculation may seem the particular bubble in Standard Chartered's share price appears to be one of those inexplicable events which plague certain companies at a time of bull markets.

Surrounding the watchdogs with a few more advisers may be wise but it won't win the public back.

Utility reforms

IT HAS clearly dawned on the Government that if it wants to go into the next general election with any hope of proclaiming the benefits of privatisation it must do something about regulation.

Rocco's return

SIR Rocco Forte wisely lost no time in putting forward a proposal to retain as much of Forte's hotel interests as is feasible: the Meridien, Exclusive and Heritage brands as well as the London hotels.

That, of course, does not mean that there will not be a bid in the near future. However, the general rule is that when a share moves as speedily as Standard's last night a statement of some kind to the Stock Exchange would be required to prevent unruly markets.

That said, this whole episode does nothing to enhance the reputation of Britain's financial community. Shareholders may currently be collecting the profits by selling their stock in the marketplace, but they might also question the waste of some £155 million in advisers' fees (between both sides) which were involved in this hostile takeover.

It is the exchange's duty to do more to ensure that such share bubbles are fully investigated and that if there is any evidence of merger/bid activity it should not be allowed to fester.

However, would not MAM — as the biggest shareholder in both companies — have been better advised to have used its clout to foster an agreed deal under which the Forte family bought out the upmarket hotels and Granada took under its control the restaurants and other hotel brands which are more in keeping with its branding experience?

Pair found guilty of £2m Belling pension fund sting

TWO men who conned the cooker maker Belling into raising its pension fund were yesterday found guilty of a series of frauds on leading European companies totalling £13 million.

Charles Deacon, 52, a solicitor, of Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs, and James Fuller, 56, a salesman, of Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, now face up to 14 years in jail.

A jury at central London's Middlesex Crown Court found both Deacon and Fuller guilty of six counts of conspiracy to defraud. Deacon was convicted on two counts of obtaining property by deception. Fuller was also found guilty of deception. Sentence will be passed today.

Belling was among the pair's first victims. In May 1991, the Enfield-based company was struggling to survive and its desperate directors could not resist.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SETS

Australia 2.00	France 7.40	Italy 2.380	Singapore 2.11
Austria 15.19	Germany 2.1850	Malta 0.5375	South Africa 5.36
Belgium 44.90	Greece 368.00	Netherlands 2.4500	Spain 182.75
Canada 2.01	Hong Kong 11.50	New Zealand 2.20	Sweden 10.23
Cyprus 0.6560	India 54.11	Norway 9.60	Switzerland 1.74
Denmark 8.44	Ireland 0.9500	Portugal 226.00	Turkey 88.25
Finland 6.79	Israel 4.73	Saudi Arabia 5.80	USA 1.4775

Supplied by NatWest Bank including Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel.

150 من الامل



Gascott... fallible

Hopley back in the frame

Robert Armstrong

AMIAN HOPLEY, dropped for last week's Five Nations opener against France, has been drafted into England's 30-man training squad...

The Wasp centre may add to the three caps he won last year by supplanting Rory Underwood. However, Gascott, whose places are under close scrutiny...



Under threat... Rory Underwood, 33 this year, is struggling to keep his place for the game against Wales next week

Adebayo is also among the 18 new players who have been added to the elite squad of 21 that travelled to Paris...

brought extra players into the training squad primarily to set up opposed practice situations in next Sunday's session at Twickenham...

18-year-old Yorkshire schoolboy who plays for Otley in League Three. Tim Rodber, provided he makes a complete recovery from knee and ankle injuries...

good reason after the South Africa game, entertains hopes of displacing his out-of-form Bath team-mate Mike Catt...

Dourthe banned for a month

Ian Main

FRANCE'S Grand Slam chances suffered a setback yesterday when their young centre Richard Dourthe was banned for 30 days for stamping on the head of England's No. 8 Ben Clarke at the Parc des Princes last Saturday...

The 21-year-old's ban rules him out of France's next two Five Nations fixtures, against Scotland at Murrayfield on Saturday week and against Ireland in Paris a fortnight later...

For the meeting with France, Scotland will field the side who beat Ireland 16-10 in Dublin last week-end. The only change is on the bench, where Gary Armstrong steps up as replacement scrum-half after an impressive game for Scotland last Friday...

Racing One Man gets go-ahead for Cheltenham

Graham Rook

ONE MAN will run in the Filler Property Investments Chase at Cheltenham on Saturday following a workout on Gordon Richards's Greystoke gallops yesterday morning...

The Gold Cup favourite has yet to win at Prestbury Park but Richards is confident that the grey will handle the course. "I wouldn't have entered him for the Gold Cup if I didn't think he could cope with it," he said...

Richard was pleased with the way One Man moved: "I made him work. He went up the all-weather with another effort then up the hill. I let him come down and then sent him up the all-weather gallop again. He's fine, but the weather is turning cold and I just hope it's all worth it."

The Cotswolds will be among the coldest areas of Britain over the next 48 hours. Occasional light snow showers are expected with overnight temperatures falling to -3C. "If the forecast is accurate, we will have a very mild day," said Philip Arkwright, clerk of the course...

Scottish National two weeks after his triumph. Mark Pitman, assistant to his mother, Jenny, said that Royal Athlete's campaign this season had been geared towards the National. "He is coming along steadily and hopefully he will have one or possibly two runs before Aintree. But we won't rush him."

The stable had six runners last year and has entered five this time, including Saturday Haydock runner-up Steve's Band, described by Mark Pitman as, "an improving horse who has done absolutely nothing wrong this season. He jumps and stays and looks the ideal National horse."

Party Politics, successful in 1992 and runner-up last season, is among the entries, together with Over The Deel, third last year, and Minnehoma, the winner two years ago...

Betting prior to the publication of the weights on February 5, 10 days before the lottery-ministered Master Oaks, Jodami and Dublin Flyer are all missing from the 1996 entry. Betting prior to the publication of the weights on February 5, 10 days before the lottery-ministered Master Oaks, Jodami and Dublin Flyer are all missing from the 1996 entry...

Huntingdon runners and riders

Table listing race details for Huntingdon, including race numbers, names, and riders.

Wincanton card with form guide

Table listing race details for Wincanton, including race numbers, names, and riders.

Lingfield (All-weather Flat)

Table listing race details for Lingfield, including race numbers, names, and riders.

Results

Table listing race results for various tracks, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Wolverhampton

Table listing race details for Wolverhampton, including race numbers, names, and riders.

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09/10/96

Keegan returns hopeful of deal

K

Tennis

Agassi goes for miracle finish

David Irvine in Melbourne

HANG the start. It's the way you finish a match that matters. That it seems, is Andre Agassi's philosophy.

Having trailed by a set in three of his previous matches, the unconventional American clawed his way back from a two-set deficit to defeat Jim Courier 6-7, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 here at Flinders Park yesterday and reach the semi-finals of the Australian Open.

"I didn't have too many options. In the men's game today, when you are down two sets and a break it's time either for a miracle or for me to get off the court," said the defending champion. "I went for the miracle."

His triumph not only marked his first victory over Courier in seven attempts since 1990 but also restored him to the No. 1 ranking he had surrendered to Pete Sampras in September.

Boris Becker again profited from the closure of the stadium roof, another storm had struck the city and Becker served up an indoor 28-ace equivalent as he put the young Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov to the sword 6-4, 7-6, 6-1. "But I think he was caught off guard even more by my strokes from the back," said the German.

Becker, whose most recent of five Grand Slam titles was won here in 1991, now faces the left-hander Mark Woodforde, the first Australian to reach the last four since Pat Cash in 1988, after the 30-year-old outmanoeuvred Sweden's Thomas Enqvist, the No. 7 seed, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

"I served exceptionally well [16 aces] and that was so important for me," said Woodforde. In fact he gave the Swede a lesson in craftsmanship as he made his way into his first big semi-final at the 38th attempt.

Once he turned the match around — and towards the end he made Courier look almost ordinary — he felt he began playing like a No. 1. Winning from two sets down in the early rounds to a player ranked 100 or so was one thing, "but when you are in that position against a great player like Jim, you're not thinking about anything except not being embarrassed".

As Agassi's game grew noticeably more aggressive, the forehand errors that had



Becker... awesome best

commented: "No doubt he was in Asia making another million or two." That might add a touch of needle.

Agassi put his slow start down to a lack of match practice. Since losing in the US Open final, a defeat which cost him the No. 1 ranking, he had played only three competitive matches before arriving in Australia, owing to a persistent chest injury.

Against what looked very much like the old Courier — his backhand was deadly — Agassi was both slow and inaccurate as his opponent increasingly imposed his authority to win the first set tie-break after denying the title holder the lead five points earlier.

The second set was even more emphatic, and when Courier broke to love at the start of the third it looked all over. Only then, when on the brink, did Agassi dig in his heels.

Agassi's semi-final opponent will be Michael Chang, whom he has beaten in all three Grand Slam matches in which they have clashed. Though he respects Chang's tennis he is not over-anxious to play for his unwillingness to play for the United States in Davis Cup competition and has said so publicly.

After Chang had declined last spring to make himself available for the clay-court tie with Italy in Palermo, Agassi

punctuated the opening 90 minutes just melted away. Courier, who had called the tune relentlessly, was gradually forced on to the back foot and seemed lost for an answer.

From 3-4 in the fourth set Agassi won seven successive games at a cost of 10 points to go 4-0 ahead in the fifth. "He came on very strongly," said Courier. "I think I maybe let him play better than I should have, but he didn't make many mistakes. He played very well those last three sets and came up with the shots when he needed them. My hat's off to him."

Compared with Chang's 8½-hour straight-sets jaunt — the most impressive run to the semi-finals of any of the survivors — Agassi has endured the equivalent of an assault course. Yet it may have given him exactly the preparation he needed after denying his opponent brimming with confidence.

He issued a clear warning to Chang. "Today's match was the closest I have been to playing to the best I feel I can play. It's the best tennis I've put together here."

Becker was at his awesome best, giving Kafelnikov — who had boasted that his name would be on the trophy — a lesson in controlled aggression. The German backed his serve with a brilliant volleying display and never once faced a break point in the 112-minute encounter.

"Maybe I was too confident," Kafelnikov conceded. "If they play the last two matches with the roof closed Boris will win it for sure. Today we saw the difference between a good player and a great player."

Agassi's game grew noticeably more aggressive, the forehand errors that had



Glossy finish... Agassi regained the world No. 1 ranking with yesterday's win over Courier PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE HOLLAND

Rugby League

In-out day for Aussies

Paul Fitzpatrick

AS ONE Australian coach arrived yesterday, another was leaving. Shaun McAra was ushered in at St Helens; Gary Grienke parted company with the London Broncos, claiming that he had been sacked.

McAra, who succeeds the dismissed Eric Hughes, made an impressive debut at his press conference at Knowsley Road while Grienke appointed coach 18 months ago when the Brisbane Broncos took over the London Crusaders, was describing his dismissal as "a bit of a shock".

London's chairman Barry Maranta claimed yesterday that the club had failed to reach agreement with Grienke on a new contract. But the coach insisted that he had been sacked.

The coach's fate was sealed by results, he can consider himself desperately unlucky. This season London finished second bottom of the Centenary Championship with seven wins from 20 games but Grienke was without many of his best players at the start of the season and at the end.

In the middle, he said, "the Broncos played some beautiful football. I think I have left the club in a better state than when I arrived".

There could be a curious twist to this tale. The appointment of McAra, following that of John Dorahy at Warrington this week, left eight of the 11 Centenary Championship clubs under the control of overseas coaches. Grienke's departure reduces the figure to seven, but London, a club owned by Australians and packed with Australian players, may now buck the trend and turn to a British coach.

Hughes and Clive Griffiths, the Welshman overlooked for the Warrington job, both offer excellent credentials, but there is little doubt that the Broncos will consider other candidates as well.

Among them could be Brian Johnson, who spent eight years at Warrington before resigning this month, his fellow Australian Ross Strudwick, who was London's coach from 1989 to 1993, and Tony Gordon, a Kiwi who made way for Grienke in May 1994.

"This is a major decision," said Maranta. "We will not rush into anything."

For the Centenary Challenge Cup tie at Dewsbury, a game the Broncos should win comfortably, three players — Terry Matterson, Kevin Langer and the articulate Tony Ras — will be in charge.

The Wales team manager Mike Nicholas said yesterday that the prospect of a Welsh side playing in Division Two in the 1996 summer season was "no pipe-dream".

Maurice Lindsay, the game's chief executive, confirmed on Tuesday that an application for membership had been received but "Mike might have difficulty getting things in place in the time available".

Nicholas, however, says that he has had discussions with the Welsh Rugby Union about the prospect of a team ready for 1996, though obviously there is still a lot of work to be done.

Tetchy Hingis goes out like a prima donna

David Irvine sees the 15-year-old prodigy self-destruct against Amanda Coetzer

THERE was nothing sweet and demure about the commentator's description — about Martina Hingis as she failed to reach the semi-finals of the Australian Open singles.

Losing hurt, and it showed, as the Swiss prodigy went out 7-5, 4-6, 6-1 to

Amanda Coetzer. She repeatedly threw her racket, even after being warned, and it was a decidedly tetchy 15-year-old, every bit the embryo prima donna, who finally bowed to the tiny South African non-stop challenge.

"It's really difficult to keep the concentration you need for two weeks," she said. "This is only the second time I've made it into the second week of a Grand Slam."

It was a match Hingis lost rather than Coetzer won. Almost 75 per cent of the winner's points came from her opponent's unforced errors. Hingis could never cope with a nasty swirling wind or her opponent's persistence. In time she will,

her peers have no doubts about that. Monica Seles is "amazed" at the youngster's maturity and Coetzer believes that the adult Hingis will be "a strong force in the game".

She is no automaton: her game is full of variety and driven by a sense of adventure. Already few of her contemporaries possess a better drop-shot or drive-volley, but she is not as dangerous to the leading

players as say Jennifer Capriati. Andrea Jaeger, Tracy Austin or Seles were at the same age.

In 18 tournaments she has reached only one final, on clay in Hamburg, but many believe it is only a matter of time before she strikes.

Seles, whom she has not yet played, already views her as "one of the smartest players out there". And that's the No. 1 talking.

Sport in brief

Athletics

Sally Gunnell hopes to run the 400 metres at the AAA Indoor Championships at the Birmingham NIA on February 24, which would be her first race in Britain for nearly 18 months after being suspended by the IAAF.

Cricket

England are poised for an innings victory against Zimbabwe in Harare after declaring at 344 for seven on the second day of the second under-19 Test. David Nash (65 not out)

Basketball

Roy Jones has turned his back on the London Towers. The IBF super-middleweight champion has instead signed for the Florida Beachdogs, a team in the minor-league Continental Basketball Association, as a conditioning coach with the possibility of becoming a player.

Ice Hockey

Nottingham Panthers will not lose the point gained in last Sunday's 4-4 draw with Fife, writes Vic Batchelder. The

Bowls

Carl Lewis, a 47-year-old financial adviser from Merthyr, beat the home favourite Mike Morgan 7-1, 7-6 in Llanelli yesterday to reach the final of the CIS Insurance Welsh indoor singles championship.

Golf

Basil Steer, the former Walker Cup selector, has taken over from Geoff Marks as president of the English Golf Union.

Hockey

Britain tighten draw-string

Pat Rowley in Barcelona

ONCE again Britain led a game, only to let their opponents draw level and even threaten to snatch a winner in the last seconds.

Their 2-2 draw with Spain made the hosts leaders of the Olympic qualifying tournament, until Netherlands beat Belgium 9-4 in a remarkable match.

The corner specialist Taco van den Hoener scored five

for the Dutch with unstoppable high flick-shots which took him past 100 international goals. Netherlands' five-goal margin put them in top place on goal difference, yet Britain, despite their three draws here, are only a point adrift and a win against the Dutch today might see them go top.

No one doubts that Britain are developing into a very useful side but they have to sustain their high-quality hockey for more than half a game.

Yesterday they kept Spain

under pressure in the first period. Rob Thompson should have given them the lead before Giles put away their first corner after 17 minutes.

Spain had the skill up front to trouble the fine British defence but Mason in goal kept them out. He has, however, been error-prone too, and when the right-half Amat broke to the byline, Mason helped the centre into goal.

Britain took only two minutes to regain the lead. Laslett fed Rob Thompson and the centre-forward trapped the

ball and shot in a trice. But Britain saw victory thwarted when a deflection put Garcia in possession on the penalty spot; he shot weakly, but not when Mason presented him with a second chance.

Spain then forced a corner with seconds remaining. Britain held their breath but Nick Thompson came off the line to charge down the shot and keep Britain on course for qualifying.

GREAT BRITAIN: Mason: Sonia Singh, Wyal, Fordham, Tatham, Hazell, Mayer, Shaw, R. Thompson, Laslett, N. Thompson, Substitutes: Gilson, Hall, Hoosen.

Entertainments

THEATRE LONDON

THE MUSICAL FAME THE MUSICAL

THE FIELDS OF AMBROSIA

DEAD GUILTY

STARLIGHT EXPRESS

THE REDUCED SHAKESPEARE CO.

THE WOMAN IN BLACK

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

CHAPTER TWO

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

LES MISERABLES

BLOOD BROTHERS

BEST MUSICAL

FUNNY MONEY

CRAZY FOR YOU

THE MOUSETRAP

BUDDY

THE SHAKESPEARE REVUE

BRIAN CONLEY BEST ACTOR

JOHNSON

ment space

SportsGuardian

England send for Sampson of the sixth form

David Hopps on the schoolboy asked by his country to do extra games

THERE is hardly a schoolboy in the land who would not have deemed it a wind-up if he had strolled out of a classroom to learn that he had been called up by England. But Paul Sampson, dumbfounded as he was, had no doubts. "I had to believe it, the headmaster told me," he said. "The last person you expect to wind you up is a headmaster."

Sampson will not play against Wales in England's next match on Saturday week, barring a spate of accidents among the nation's wings, but his presence in a 30-man training squad started a grey and dormant Yorkshire morning into life.

An 18-year-old sixth-former at Woodhouse Grove, Bradford, Sampson is captain of the school XV. His experience of senior rugby amounts to half a dozen games with League Three Otley, beginning with a pastoral debut against Upper Wharfedale. "Next season I'm looking for first-XV rugby in the First Division," he said. Bath, Wasps and Leicester are jostling for his favours and that could mean the offer of a university scholarship if he passes his A-levels this year.

Sampson comes from po-



Gee whiz... Paul Sampson contemplates his future with Carling and the lads outside Woodhouse Grove school yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

tent rugby stock, although until now allegiances have always been with league rather than union. His cousin Dean, the Castleford prop, is an England international; uncle Malcolm played on the wing for Wakefield Trinity in the 1963 cup final; and uncle David is a former Castleford coach.

His father Brian, a league amateur in his playing days, is now a "union convert". Some evenings, even at 62, he prods Paul into a

walk up the road to Thackley Football Club, where he shows him a few swerves and sidesteps. "I never knew he could still run 20 yards until I saw those," said Sampson. "He is still a big influence..."

So too is Nigel Melville, his coach at Otley and a former England captain who was also first called up as a teenager. "It will not be an ordeal for him to train alongside the likes of Carling and Gossett," Melville said. "He is a very confident

young man with incredible pace and talent. He scored four tries from full-back against Kendal recently and I believe that is his best position."

His dad still chuckles at the memory. "He forgot his gunshield so I went back into the dressing room to get it," he said. "By the time I got back he'd just run 70 yards for the first try."

When it comes to "fast-tracking" selections, no one is more suited to the description than Sampson. He

has run 100 metres in 10.7sec, which makes him the fastest man in the England squad, and he is the Yorkshire junior men's champion over 100m and 200m. Roger Howard, the school's rugby master, is adamant: "I've never seen a boy so fast on the rugby field. He takes your breath away."

Last Sunday was strenuous even for such a sports-orientated family. After weekend training with England Under-19 near Wolver-

hampton, a rapid drive to Sheffield enabled Sampson to compete in the Northern Counties Sprint Championships, where he won the 60m final in a record 6.94sec.

"I've always cleaned his boots for him," said Brian. "I used to do it to save money; otherwise his boots would have just rotted. Next time I'll do it out of pride. I might even polish the studs."

England squad, page 13

Mood-swings that torment the pros



Angela Patmore

WHAT makes affable Ernie Els suddenly fling his putter with such force that it cracks in two against his golf bag? What prompts the popular Scot Colin Montgomerie, in the middle of the Johnnie Walker World Championship in idyllic Tryall, to utter the F-word? What causes the Open champion John Daly, playing there in 1991, rabidly to bend his putter out of shape? And what compels four amateurs, mid-swing on the fairways of Camberley Heath, to smash a car windscreen and lambast the driver with their clubs?

Golf, a balmy game to drive you barmy. In 1927, Dr Theo Hyslop, an "alienist" (psychiatrist) working at "Bethlem" hospital in London, noted in his Mental Handicaps In Golf: "The 'insanity of doubt' may in golfers attain to such severity as to warrant the diagnosis of 'cerebral pruritus' or 'mental itch'... The mental stance is affected by pros and cons, until a mental 'wriggle-wriggle' manifests itself by physical readjustments or grotesque flourishes."

Dr Hyslop advised golfers to cultivate "automatism" and not ruin performance by too much thinking. Unfortunately, since even a brisk professional golfer takes 16 hours to complete 72 holes, and since he spends a mere 7½ minutes hitting the ball, he has 15 hours 52½ minutes in which to worry.

TO THE amateur, golf is addictive, an adorable religion, even fun. But the professionals, some of whom begin a new Volvo European Tour in Singapore today, see the sport from the inside. They know its hidden depths as a stress experiment, and the spectacle of some of golf's former high-fliers in torment should perhaps arouse our suspicions concerning this "innocent" pastime.

Nick Faldo, struggling on the practice green last October with a plastic bottle stuffed under his arm to steady his elbow; Ben Hogan, "tight as a banjo string" in the Fifties, paralysed for so long over his putter that even his caddy couldn't look at him; Bernhard Langer in the Eighties,

reversing his hands on the putter to control his agonising twitches and "yips". Tony Jacklin, falling from grace in 1974, haunted by nightmares about being trapped in an enormous sink and putting in the plughole.

Golf rattles its finest players. Some say they "can't find enough rest rooms out there" because it affects their digestion. Those heroes of yesterday, Henry Cotton and Bobby Jones, both suffered disabling stomach cramps. Big hitters find putting tense and humiliating because "it ought to be so easy". They step away, suffer spasms and distort themselves into strange shapes. Others endure the long-game misery of "shanking". Others throw clubs, or fits. Still others get to the last hole with a big lead and then "take the gas" — become wobbly and incompetent from nerves. Nobody is immune. Even Arnold Palmer once accused himself of fear of winning.

But why should golf unglue a fellow? Ostensibly there is nothing to fear on a golf course. It is just a tract of land with a few humps and hollows, where people can amuse themselves in the fresh air. Why then is it held out in such a way? Why does the designer lengthen it to counter long hitters, and place obstacles where they will cause split decisions? Why does he devise ways to make the golfer think left when he should be thinking right, backwash as well as should he think forwards? Why does he build a bunker or hypnotic ponds? In order to mobilise fear.

THE psychiatrist Dr David Morley, author of *Golf and the Mind*, observes that this "game" appears sometimes to be a conspiracy to drive players mad. "Hazards on the golf course are a rich source of anxiety and tension. Bunkers precipitate anxiety in all but the most expert golfers, and water, with all its regressive implications, has a strange way of mobilising tension." Bunkers like those called "Hell" are meant to frighten. Bobby Jones said of the Road Hole at St Andrews that it was "one of the most terrifying experiences the game has to offer". Not just a hole; a terrifying experience.

Like the great allegories of literature, the golf course is a journey through a man's own mind, encountering his demons and doubts as he comes to the different parts of the course designed to trigger them off. He must look panic in the eye, and whistle. If he cannot do that, the bunkers will get him, or the slippery greens, or the Road Hole or "the gas" on the 18th.

Howe backs the Robson cause

David Lacey

BYRAN ROBSON was yesterday nominated by Don Howe, his fellow England coach, as the best man to succeed Terry Venables after the European Championship. Robson may feel he needs more managerial experience, but Howe believes the former

England captain already has the right qualities to take over the squad for the 1998 World Cup qualifiers.

"I think Bryan should get the job," said Howe, who like Robson was recruited for the England coaching staff when Venables succeeded Graham Taylor two years ago. "I've got a feeling the Football Association thinks he should get the job, too."

"It's up to the lad himself. I know Terry has said it should be an older man's job, a job for someone more experienced, but I don't think so. Franz Beckenbauer wasn't that old when he took over the German team, was he?"

The 60-year-old Howe, who won 23 England caps as a right-back in the late Fifties and coached Arsenal in the League and FA Cup double in

1971, is the most experienced member of Venables's backroom staff for Euro '96.

He was Ron Greenwood's England assistant for the 1982 World Cup and Bobby Robson's No. 2 for the World Cups of 1986 and 1992 as well as the 1988 European Championship, standing down when Taylor took over.

A growing number of people, including some within the FA, believe that if the firm of Robson and Howe was good enough to take England to the World Cup semi-finals six years ago, then the partnership of Howe and Robson, young Mr Bryan that is, would be the ideal combination for 1998.

Bryan Robson, who won 90 England caps and was denied at least another 25 by injuries, is 39 and has been manager at Middlesbrough for a season and a half.

He has not ruled himself out as an England candidate for the future but for the moment feels he is still learning the job at club level.

Nevertheless Howe feels Robson would have no problems taking over from Venables in time for the first World Cup qualifier in Moldova on September 1.

"Bryan is a deep thinker and he has the respect of the players," he said at Bisham Abbey yesterday as England completed the first of the two three-day training sessions Venables has organised before Bulgaria visit Wembley in March for a warm-up game.

"They love him. They admired him as an ex-international who did ever so well, and now they admire him as a manager. You can't have anything better than that."

"Bryan is an international coach? No problem. And at this level, tactically, you've got to be on the ball all the time. You've got to watch what is going on both in this

country and abroad. You've got to be right up with things."

Should Robson change his mind and get the job, Howe would still be a willing assistant. He wants nothing more than that, however — and he has had a heart bypass operation.

"The position I've got now is good enough for me," Howe insisted yesterday. "I'm happy doing what I'm doing. I love it out there."

"I'd love to stay on and help Bryan if he wanted me, but that would be up to him. The new man may want his own staff, we understand that. That's the game."

"However, it would be a shame to let the work of the last two years go to waste. It's been terrific work under Terry, so well constructed is the work out there. The players love it, and the way he gets on with things."

"The spirit's as good as it was with Bobby Robson," Howe added. "He created a terrific spirit. That's why we did so well in Italy."

Yesterday Taylor not only nominated Nottingham Forest's Frank Clark as his choice for national coach but said in a newspaper article that Venables had been badly advised over the World Cup qualifying dates because England will be away to Italy in the last game.

Venables responded that the alternative would have been to travel to Italy in February 1997, rather than October, which would have meant England playing three of their first four qualifying matches away.

He also felt that playing Moldova, potentially the weakest team in the group, at Wembley in the penultimate fixture was an advantage. "There are no perfect draws when you've got opposition like Italy home and away," he concluded.



Howe... praises co-coach

Guardian Crossword No 20,558

Set by Orlando

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32

- Across**
- 8 Butler in battle with liver but no heart (8)
 - 10 Tree-top tall, and part below the trunk (5)
 - 11 Exclusive group dwelling by lake (7)
 - 12 Overseer required because handle is turning (7)
 - 13 Animal devouring really disheartened antelope (4)
 - 14 Palace — one that has bad poetry written about it (10)
 - 15 Special communications channel for hotel in resort (3,4)
 - 17 Joker with dog or bird (7)
 - 19 Put on a new coat when someone who yields comes back to speak? (10)
 - 22 Don, for whom Maria leaves marijuana (4)
 - 23 Instrument seen when one's caught cold in game (7)
- Down**
- 1 Shrink film by Hitchcock before the part is cast (15)
 - 2 Find me on your street under a stone (8)
 - 3 Busy worker going to river for a drink (4)
 - 4 Scrooge, before one of the Psalms (8)
 - 5 Ship's movement with 25 (6)
 - 6 Moving rendition of prison band (8)
 - 7 Without a little smile face is gloomy (5)
 - 8 They illuminate obscure channels in trees (7,8)

TEATIME PRODUCT

16 A nice hot stew that's unfinished (9)

17 Ordered a wet sort of pudding or sweet (5-3)

18 For a flower border I look north — it may be built on a fell (8)

20 Fraud, it appears, after half a month (8)

21 Shapes formed when hob rim goes to pot (8)

25 Male deer without aspiration or skills (4)

Solution tomorrow

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